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VILLAGE LIFE IN EGYPT

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SKETCHES OF THE SAÏD.

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BY

BAYLE ST. JOHN,

AUTHOR OF

"Two Years' Residence in a Levantine Family,"
Adventures in the Libyan Desert," "Views in the Oasis of Siwah," &c.

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PREFACE.

THE following pages, though written under the immediate inspiration, as it were, of a ten-months' journey, concluded in July 1851, are in part the fruit of previous experience. In bringing out a work dedicated chiefly to sketches of Christian manners in Egypt, I undertook to make a more careful study of the fellâh, or country population, until now comparatively neglected. Perhaps the present volumes do not exactly fill up the hesitating outline that existed in my mind at that time; but they will be found, let me hope, to contain a tolerably complete supplement to the labours of some of my

predecessors. The scene-painting which I have here and there attempted, seems to me not extraneous to my plan. There is a close connexion between the physical conformation of all countries and the mental idiosyncracies of their inhabitants—at least in the inferior stages of society. Civilisation by degrees liberates man to a considerable extent from the tyranny of material influences, but those influences are ever ready to resume their sway; so that what Cæsar said before our era of a people, that they were too saucy for servitude and too licentious for liberty, may with truth be applied to the unfortunate nation that has succeeded to the disadvantages of the same clime.

In Egypt, despite the changes of dynasties, of language, of religions, and the attempted renewal of races, the mass of the people seem always to have been framed for the most abject servitude. Many causes, no doubt, have operated to this result; but the chief probably is,

the original configuration of the country, and its dependence for support on the annual inundation of the Nile. This inundation would, from the outset, have been merely disastrous, had it not been guided and subjugated by human ingenuity. The chiefs or kings, who, whilst the people were in too low a state to dream of combination, threw up dykes and dug canals, must easily have acquired the prestige and authority of demi-gods. The continual preservation of these public works demanded a watchful vigilance and care which power, as it was then constituted, alone could devote. The system of forced labour had its origin then in absolute necessity; and it is not difficult to account for its subsequent extension and perpetuation. In all ages and countries the yoke has first been placed on the necks of the people by men who pretend a tender solicitude for their welfare, and who "give a pea to get a bean."

The limits of a preface do not permit me to

trace the history of Egyptian serfdom. I wish to point out, simply, that at the present day the agricultural labouring classes remain precisely in the same relation to the Government as under the Pharaohs. There have been intervals of comparative well-being; but during the current century the fellâhs have been absolutely nailed down to the soil. The Pasha, the great Turkish landholders—any petty proprietor, indeed—can dispose, without appeal, of the services, and, by means of the naboot, even of the lives of those who cultivate the Nile-given land.

The inhabitants of cities, when they can efface the track by which they have come from the villages, are, practically, better off, although now and then the same terrible right of property is claimed over them. The whole male adult population of Alexandria was once turned out to work at the fortifications; and the Sheikhs of the various trade corporations are from time to time called upon to furnish a certain number

of workmen. Thus, for example, were the cotton-factories of Boulac supplied with hands; and boys who had from their infancy done nothing but cry "sookh" and "arga" at the tails of galled donkeys in the streets of Cairo, were soon drilled, of course by the stick, into very passable operatives.

There is a tendency, even under the system of competition, to reduce the retribution of labour towards the lowest possible limit. It can excite no surprise, therefore, that in a country where the employer himself fixes the rate of wages, the lowest possible limit is attained, even overpassed. In many cases the fellâhs do not receive sufficient to support life; and are compelled to die or steal, if this word, as a term of depreciation, can be applied to a resumption of the product of their labour unjustly withheld.

The natural result of the system of forced labour is depopulation; and we find accordingly

that whenever it has been rigorously applied, as it has been since the usurpation of the Cavalla family, the ranks of the fellâhs have been rapidly thinned. It would be rash to bring forward positive statements of figures relative to a country whose official statistics are quite romantic; but those who maintain that the population of Egypt has dwindled in fifty years from three millions five hundred thousand to barely two millions, are probably correct. Famine, War, Pestilence, Emigration, have vied with each other in activity. Under the head Famine I rank all the modes in which, by means of taxation, arbitrary interference with trade and commerce, destruction of native industries, attempted introduction of exotic ones, imprisonment of the people in their several districts, exaction of unpaid labour, monopolies, seizure of heads of families and adults, and all the vexatious ingenuity of Gallico-Turkish administration, the Government has contrived to check or more than coun-

terbalance the generous productiveness of Egyptian maternity. The Valley of the Nile would now be a desert, and the Nile would swell in vain, if there had not been from time to time, and here and there, a kind of passive resistance favoured by circumstances or by individual wisdom. I have no doubt that a prudent emancipation of the fellâhs would double the population of the country in twenty years. Their powers of increase are enormous: and the tenacity with which they tread the path of gain sets aside all fear of their becoming a people of paupers.

Perhaps the contemplation of the unhappy condition of the fellâhs has softened me into a too favourable estimate of their character. There appears to me nothing repulsive about them; nor is there anything very fascinating. Like all agricultural races, their intellects are slow and somewhat obtuse. The smell of the earth has in no country a favourable effect on the developement of mind; and though Virtue may follow

the plough, Genius abides in the fields only as an amateur.

I have admitted, therefore, throughout, that the clownish fellâhs are far inferior in capacity to their brethren of the cities. In certain points of morality they are superior; but whether this arises from want of sophistication, or want of opportunity, may be left undecided. The Egyptian shopkeepers—not the Christians, but the Muslims—are as a body considered honest; but the citizens generally are sadly corrupt. I have pointed out, as far as I could venture, in what respects.

Incidentally, in these volumes, topics are touched upon, which do not exactly correspond to the title. Here and there, not without misgivings of danger, I have spoken, it will be thought, disrespectfully of the School of Hieroglyphists, simply because I am dissatisfied with the petty results of prodigious studies, and not with any desire to undervalue the labour, learn-

ing, and ingenuity that have been displayed. Schoolboys always, from ignorance, feel contempt for the intellects of grammarians and lexicographers, who construct the instruments of torture on which their young minds are racked; and I may be somewhat similarly situated: but at least *they* arrive by degrees at the conviction that they are acquiring a new instrument of knowledge; whilst, as yet, the study of hieroglyphics has promised *me* nothing but disappointment and confusion. A young writer of talent, who has lately published an ingenious book, boldly says in substance:—"Since all who precede me differ in their results, it is no presumption to bring forward yet another theory." Indeed it is not, if it be not presumption to attempt a theory at all. Your theory will not be the last. To-morrow will yield fresh schemes of Chronology—fresh views of History; and if ever a Key be really discovered to the Hieroglyphics, it may be made manifest that an

amount of genius or patience sufficient to construct a Code of Laws has been expended in the production of a mass of ingenious errors, spangled by a few lucky guesses.

I should not think it necessary to apologise for my expression of scepticism, had I not observed in certain quarters a disposition to remove this class of studies out of the province of profane comment. The "new discoveries" have been erected almost into a creed; and if we are not quite bound to believe in Isis and Osiris, we are expected to have implicit faith in the expounders of their fanciful history. I am almost afraid of being indicted for heresy.

However, the die is cast; the last sheet is struck off; and I can only express repentance for my rashness, and beg that the reader, whose predilections may be engaged on the other side, will bear me no ill-will. This book has been written with the intention of enabling him to travel pleasantly by his fireside, or to while away

the evening hours, when custom, darkness, and evil spirits confine him to his cabin, should he ever have the good fortune to spend a month or two in the swift-shooting Zeyn-eṇ-Neel.

By the way, I am quite serious in endeavouring to dissuade those who would really enjoy and appreciate the Nile, from abandoning the dahabieh for the steamer, unless, indeed, for imperative reasons Egypt must be "done" in a fortnight. Our boat, which, being owned by an Englishman, is kept perfectly clean and free from vermin of all kinds, enabled us to proceed, when we desired it, with great speed. It has the advantage of being three-masted; so that we could sail close to the wind, and double points under canvass, whilst others were obliged to track. In rough weather, likewise, we were not compelled to lie-to, as with the trinket or foresail there was no danger of a capsize. In this, or any other boat possessing similar qualifications, the whole of Egypt may be visited and examined

leisurely in less than two months—which is certainly not too much to devote to the most interesting country on the face of the earth.

I may take this opportunity of mentioning that my father, from whom I have derived an affection for the land of Egypt, which experience has increased, is preparing for the press a work, entitled "Isis and Osiris," in which that country is made the frame-work of most brilliant imaginations.

B. St. J.

Paris, July 1852.

VILLAGE LIFE IN EGYPT,

&c. &c.

CHAPTER I.

Of English Residents in Alexandria and their Travels—Comforts of an Oriental Home—Departure for the Upper Country—Crew and Attendants—Out on the Canal—Reminiscences of a Khamsin Day—Extraordinary Scene—Beautiful Evening—Description of a Marshy Tract—Line of proposed Railroad—Considerations—Public Works in Egypt—English Mails—Birkeh and its Beauties—The Nile.

The great holiday of English residents in Alexandria is a trip up the Nile—to Cairo, to Siout, or to the Cataracts. They look forward to such a trip as to the best reward of years of monotonous life; for, once under the influence of the inexplicable fascination of the climate, they feel but a mediocre longing for London, and think Liverpool can well do without them.

Ten, twenty years, sometimes march slowly by, and no nostalgia interferes with digestion; newspapers, yet unfragrant from the press, bring an English atmosphere to them, quite racy enough for their degenerate lungs; correspondence registers the domestic catastrophes of friends whose faces are forgotten, telling who has taken home a pale-faced bride, what strange incomprehensible man has rocked a baby of his own, who has been buried in that frost-bound earth; and if these voluntary exiles, wicked bachelors for the most part, talk of going to the old country, it is as the Muslims talk of their anticipated paradise—with a very marked conviction that they are better where they are.

All aspire, however, "to do the Nile." It is mortifying enough to fail in the achievement of so moderate an ambition. Many of them live on in hope to the end of their days, speaking, it is true, from time to time, in a very disrespectful manner of fate, but in secret counting ever on the fulfilment of their wishes and enjoying the sweets of their trip by anticipation. They would, perhaps, find it difficult to explain this perpetual state of expectancy. The claims of business are not so inexorable as they pretend. An acquired indolence, a habit of

procrastination, the blandishments of that syren —an Oriental home, the comfortable slippers, the dreamy divan, the shisheh softly bubbling in a half-darkened room, the small cozy circle of friends, who still smile gravely at the joke first perpetrated before Mohammed Ali became a conqueror, and who join in sympathetic grumblings at the stern necessity that binds them down to that horrid delightful place—which I shall always quit without regret and see again with joy—such are some of the explanations of the mystery.

During my first residence in Egypt, circumstances likewise prevented me from going much beyond Cairo; and as I had felt the same longing as the rest, I resolved last year to repair the omission, and went out with the firm determination not to yield to the enervating influence of the dusty Capua of Egypt. Having seen all my old Levantine friends, the respected Sitt Madoula among the rest, and been gently scolded for putting them, as they had heard, in print, I started with two friends, towards the middle of November, from the neighbourhood of Pompey's Pillar, in a magnificent dahabiah, justly entitled Zeyn-en-Neel, the Ornament of the Nile. Good Reis Suleiman, who had accompanied me on more juvenile excursions several

years before; Derweesh, who has survived the fears and perils of the Libyan Desert; Sid Ahmed, who has all the qualities of an excellent interpreter except a knowledge of languages; another Ahmed, surnamed the Savage,—all well-known faces—had mustered in due time, as likewise had a choice crew, containing several Mohammeds, one Goomma or Friday, one Ramadhan, an Abdallah, a Bedawi, an Abd-el-Haï, and other experienced mariners. Our voyage began under good auspices; and, despite the fashionable calumnies against Arabs in general, and Arab boatmen in particular, I must say at once that all these people behaved so well from beginning to end, that, even had I no other experience to rely upon, I should ever be ready to break a lance in favour of their much misrepresented race.

An occasional breath of wind, and the more steady assistance of a rope, soon disengaged us from the long street of villas and gardens that borders the canal. It was a fine, hot, shiny day, as nearly all days are in Egypt; but when we came to open ground, a fresh breeze from the sea, over the palm-groves and sand hillocks of Ramleh, filled our sails, and pleasantly broke the force of the sun's beams. The water of the

canal, copiously supplied by the recent inundation, rose nearly to the brink of the two mighty dykes that zig-zag across the low plain; and as we enjoyed our keyf under the portico in front of the cabin we could see the forts, and minarets, and white palaces of Alexandria, fading in the sunny distance, and the broad lake Mareotis stretching its burnished surface to the horizon, where phantom islands and fragments of desert shore hang in a kind of mirage between it and the sky. When the canal is full, a wide prospect is almost always to be obtained on either hand; and as we advanced, we could from the cabin-roof even distinguish the martello-towers that line the shores of Aboukir Bay. The land between is level as a water-surface, and at the autumn-season, indeed, becomes a shallow lake, supplied by filtration from the sea. It gradually dries through the winter, and by summer time becomes a hard gravelly plain, where the mirage loves to abide. As you ride across it towards Aboukir or Rosetta, all kinds of fantastic illusions puzzle the eye; and a stranger may well be surprised to find that that seeming hillock dwindles, as he draws nigh, into a rusted cannon-ball fired in the days when Abercrombie fell. Other relics of warfare are dug up in

greater numbers amid the hillocks towards the sea; and the supply of buttons belonging to English and French soldiers is almost fabulous. The Arabs have always some of them to offer to collecting travellers. They have learned the fact of our weakness without comprehending it; and in their opinion every new-comer is bound to lay out a few fuddahs in the purchase of such mementoes. Possibly they imagine we are accomplishing some religious duty. At any rate they look with undisguised contempt and aversion on the wag who offers to sell them as many buttons and pieces of old iron as they please for half the price they demand. It is singular, by the way, that no nation relishes the wit of another. British jokes have often been the foundation of French facts; and "the same to you" will our neighbours reply. An Arab on being called "the son of a gun," will gravely observe that he is not a soldier.

Devising somewhat in this way the dahabiah gently bending to the wind, we left Alexandria behind, and soared, as it were, over the vast plain that still separated us from the real Egypt. I remember once making an excursion on the canal during the period of the Khamsin winds. We had reached some ten miles from

Alexandria, when a perfect tempest, that came with whoop and halloo over the lake, compelled us to stop and moor close under the southern bank in a little reach, far distant from any human habitations. The hot air was filled with a perfect fog of sand from the Libyan Desert, miles away; and not only with sand but with little white fragments of stone, that pattered on our cabin roof like hail. We got out upon the causeway, in the midst of the tempest, to gaze upon the scene. There was a wild magnificence about it. As far as the eye could reach, a dim expanse of water and level plain extended beneath the hot and dusty sky. The whereabouts of the sun could only be guessed at by the aid of a rich yellow glow towards the zenith. The sinuous course of the canal, made sinuous because the Easterns suppose that water accustomed to rivers will not flow in a straight line, was traceable only a short distance on either hand, soon becoming lost in the masses of rushing vapour. We seemed to be standing on the extreme verge of organised creation, and that beyond—all elements—fire and water, and earth and air, had been forcibly mingled, and were struggling to find their natural place. We could just distinguish a vast undefined surface of foaming

waves that rolled towards us, and seemed to shout as they rolled. We could sometimes even hear them tread rapidly up the long shelving shore, until they had almost overreached their bounds, and then slide back with broken murmurs, far, far away. Our eyes, scorched by the wind that whistled hot upon them, and blinded by the dust, soon wearied of gazing on this inform prospect, and we retreated to the boat, which heaved and struggled and bent by the bank-side as the hurricane clung to its masts and yards, and seemed to threaten every moment to drag it away in its headlong course. The cabin was carefully closed, and all apertures stopped to exclude the scorching blast; and we sat for hours listening to the moaning of the wind, the dashing of the waters, the quarrelsome rustling of the bushes on the banks, the pelting of the heavy sand, and the roaring sound of some small boat cleaving its way under bare poles towards Alexandria.

The wind ceased at length, as if by magic; the curtain of sand dissolved from overhead; and the balmy freshness of evening once more invited us forth. How changed was the scene! A softly-tinted sky overhead; a heathery expanse around; beyond, the lake, hushing itself

to silence in its shallow bed, and smiling, as if half-ashamed of its late uneasy clamour. We listened to catch the faintest sound. All was tranquil as a dream. The quiet became almost physically painful; and we went by trodden paths down towards the margin of the water, hoping that this deathlike stillness would cease to be. The jolly croaking of a company of gossiping frogs now came to cheer us; and the path led to some fields of half-ripe barley, and some beds of onions, telling that human industry had visited that spot. With the exception of the causeway of the canal, rising high over the plain, there was not a single deviation from the dead level, not a mound, not even a tree, or a house; and yet, somehow, the whole region produced the impression of being sunk into a hollow below the ordinary surface of the earth. We waited to see the sun go down in peace over this singular prospect, to observe the rapid gathering of darkness, and how the stars seemed to huddle sociably towards us lest our solitude might be too oppressive; and again returned to the boat, just as some soft summer lightning-gleams began to throb through the eastern sky.

It is far more difficult to convey in words the impression of such a scene, which might be

reproduced with a few horizontal strokes of the pencil and a few sober colours, than of one more picturesque in the ordinary acceptation of the word. I can scarcely, indeed, justify, even to myself, the pleasure I used to take in excursions to various points of the canal — to miserable villages clustering round the dilapidated country-house and sickly-looking deserted garden of some insolvent Levantine — to Karioun, and Kinjosman, and Abu Hommuz — where vast level plains stretch on either hand of the elevated canal, with here and there mounds thrown up at equal intervals, like the barrows of some unsocial and forgotten heroes. Many of those mounds contain large squared stones and pieces of shattered columns — the relics, probably, of temples and villas, that of old, in more prosperous times, sparkled above this plain like white sails over the green seas of the south; but they are now no more than the ruins of ruins, and tell nothing of the past. At most seasons of the year the whole region is in a state of bog and quagmire. Even late in the spring it is intersected with ditches, and runnels, and pools, and puddles; and as one picks one's way along there is a continual cross-fire of active frogs, that go flopping into the water on all hands. Bright-

winged and gaudy-coated flies whiz low along the squashy ground, whilst legions of musquitoes seem to thicken into a mist here and there. Rare hamlets of crazy mud-huts, I will not say rise, but crouch amidst the slimy pools; and from them comes forth a wan population to cultivate a few fields and vegetable plots, or tend the cows, and sheep, and goats, that feed on the coarse grass of the dreary half-submerged meadows. The mind is oppressed, yet interested, by the contemplation of this sad-featured scene, which contrasts so powerfully with the brawling and bustling of Alexandria, and with the animation of the canal itself, where fleets of boats and occasional asthmatic steam-tugs move to and fro amidst a perfect chorus of hailings, and cursings, and threatenings — often diversified by a tremendous crash that terminates in a vigorous application of rope's end.

Such, with the exception of one or two cheerful little spots — veritable oases in a morass desert, close on the borders of the canal — is the kind of country through which the first fifty miles of the proposed railway, about which so much talk has been of late, is to pass. Iron, they say, is a great civiliser; and its presence in that capacity is greatly wanted in Egypt. But I

do not think that the introduction of a railway, unless under certain conditions not likely to be complied with, will be beneficial at the present moment. Where is the capital to come from? From England? And if so, is it to be expended directly among the people or paid into the government treasury? Has it been stipulated that free labour shall be employed, or are the unfortunate fellahs to be again dragged from their villages, as they were for the construction of the canal, as they are for that of the Barrage and all other so-called public undertakings, and forced to work in hunger, whilst the divans of Cairo and Alexandria are disputing whose turn it is to send them their miserable supply of rice? Unless these questions be satisfactorily settled, I should regard the commencement of a railway as a curse rather than as a blessing to Egypt; and I warn all speculators who may urge on the project, that they are very probably undertaking the responsibility of a great sacrifice of human life.

Any one versed in the internal history of Egypt during the government of Mohammed Ali must know that his great mistake, or rather his great crime, was, that he endeavoured at any sacrifice to force the country into a resemblance

with the European states, whose military power he envied and whose praises he coveted. He levied armies and launched navies, and introduced manufactures, and undertook public works; and every step he took spread disaster, and misery, and death, through the population. For these things were not the natural product of the rising prosperity of the country. To bring them about he was compelled to lay on taxes of unexampled severity, which nearly extinguished all motive to exertion in the fellahs, and rapidly reduced their numbers. It is to be regretted that he had not a taste for building pyramids. He might have caused equal misery, but there would have been something to show for the money. His armies have been devoured by fire and sword; his fleets have rotted in the port; his fortifications are still unarmed; his manufactories are for the most part abandoned to rats and spiders; and the Barrage, at length suspected to be a great mistake, will probably never be finished. What Egypt wants is a gradual emancipation of the fellahs, the destruction of the system of forced labour. Its people are remarkably acquisitive and naturally industrious. Let them alone, and they will soon find the way to prosperity, and make railroads for themselves

when necessary. In the meantime, if English capitalists could obtain permission to spend about a million sterling in their own way in improving the communication between Alexandria and Cairo, it would be very convenient for Indian travellers, and would not only be temporarily beneficial to the fellahs, but might lead to a permanent improvement in their condition.

There is no reason, however, for supposing that proper stipulations have been made; and I suspect that the worthy British merchants and others who have pushed on this project have thought of everybody, even of themselves, but not of the unfortunate people who will be caught like wild beasts, and forced to do all the rough work of the railway, which will thus become a fresh instrument of oppression. It will be the more regrettable if arrangements have not been made in the interest of the fellahs, because this is not the first time that English suggestions have been inconsiderately busy in Egypt. The railway is intended, in part, to supplant the Mahmoudiyeh canal; and the dreadful traditions of starvation connected with that undertaking must be familiar to every one.

I may mention here, that although for many

years steamers have plied between Cairo and Alexandria, our outward-bound mails are still carried across country, on a drove of galled asses; and that the homeward-bound are brought down the Nile in a row-boat.

These observations have somewhat inopportunely arrested me at the outset of my journey. But the dahabiah has not been stationary. A breeze, freshening towards sunset, has carried us well forward; and half-an-hour after the evanescent twilight we arrive at Birkeh, the dirty little paradise of the fast young men of Alexandria, and also of the crews of the grain-boats. The brawny Fatmeh and other syrens are here ever ready to entice all passers-by into a miserable coffee-house, furnished with two gozehs, or water-pipes—made of common cane and a hollowed cocoa-nut—a few shibooks, and half-a-dozen cracked fingans. A single oil-lamp swung in its centre, and scarcely allowed us to distinguish the dim forms of the occupants. As we moored, the chorus of some sentimental song was interrupted in the midst of an impassioned quaver; and several dark figures came groping down to the bank, where they lingered awhile impatiently. But we had been there before; and no fascinating reminiscences induced us to repeat the visit. The

singing soon began again, and was agreeably intermingled with the barking of dogs, the chattering of the crew, the creaking of masts and yards, and the rustling and rippling of the water round the stems of passing boats determined to take advantage of the favourable breeze. But all these sounds ceased by degrees; and when, before retiring to rest, we went out on the deck, the village was lying still and silent on the bank in its filth, like a huge dung-hill beneath the cold and pearly beams of the moon. Both the wicked and the weary were at rest. There was nothing to see but a shred of bright smooth water between two long dim mounds of earth, and a sky that was all too gorgeous and vast to canopy such a petty landscape.

A little before noon next day we reached the locks of Atfeh, and paid thirteen piastres and a half for permission to descend into the Nile.

CHAPTER II.

Modes of Travelling on the Nile—the easy and the go-ahead—River Scenery—Palms—Towns and Villages—Mohammed Ali a Leveller—Visit to Kafr Mustanat—Rural Dancing Academy—Dancing Girls—Young Pupils—Sales of Children—Origin and History of the Ghawazee—Influence of Labour and Vice on Beauty—Gypsies—the two Daughters of the Barmekides—Wandering Propensities of the Ghawazees—Pilgrimages—Reason of their Banishment to Upper Egypt—Reformed Votaries of Vice—a One-eyed Beauty and an undignified Exit.

THERE are two different modes of ascending the Nile, according as travellers are in a hurry or leisurely disposed. In the first case, you must be in a perpetual conflict with the reis and the crew; you must coax or bully, promise or threaten; you must be up with the first streak of day, and sleep with one eye open at night; you must see that there is a due supply of loaves piled on the roof of the cabin, that none of the men sneak on shore without leave, that the tackle is in good order, that a sufficient

number of hands go to the tracking-rope; and you must storm and rave if the boat runs aground, until it gets off again. At least this is the system recommended by gentlemen of the go-ahead school. I have made such a trip once, and never wish to do so again; for the celerity gained is but comparative. Unless a good wind serve, your progress must, after all, be slow; and there is a great deal of bustle and annoyance without any corresponding advantage.

I have always preferred the other way of going to work, especially in my various excursions along the shores of the Delta. The object was not so much to leave a certain number of villages and palm-groves in the rear, as to escape from absolute repose. A few hours' sail will suffice to reveal nearly all the variety of which the landscape is susceptible. There are no new prospects to expect, no new points of view to attain. The same kind of country spreads on all sides in its vast monotonous tranquillity. Plain and wood, wood and plain, succeed and resemble one another; the village you reach is the counterpart of the one you have quitted; and the same white tomb seems constantly gleaming from the same copse. Even the river, with its level jungly islands, its

golden-shored creeks, its tortuous branches, its lake-like reaches, its sombre eddies and shining shallows, appears to take a delight in repeating itself. The eye perpetually recognises characteristics it has before observed. The long rows of snow-white birds that are seen each morning on the edge of some vast sandbank, make their appearance again in the evening, as if the breeze had blown in vain, and the boat had but barely held its own against the mighty current.

Yet it must not be supposed that this want of striking variety introduces any sense of weariness into the mind. There is something in the climate of Egypt that disposes one not to seek for violent contrasts, but to allow with pleasure the approach of such ideas only as impress themselves by imperceptible degrees. I have always been happy on the Nile, always content with myself and with the world. In the absence of the excitement created elsewhere by the perpetual alternation of hill and valley; of rocky or wood-lined vistas opening and shutting in on either hand; of ruin-crowned rocks or shadowy hollows, scenes of tragic legends; of torrents dancing in the sunshine, or lakelets wrapt in tranquil dreams; of moist green uplands in spring, or of autumn-gilded forests; I found

pleasure in discovering the little accidents that diversified, to an attentive eye, the scene that at first appeared so monotonous. Seated on the roof of the cabin, I endeavoured to become acquainted with the outline of every grove, the peculiar beauties of every minaret, the bearings of every tomb, the direction of every canal. I traced the course of little caravans or family parties, softened by distance into a modern parody of the Flight, as they wound along the dusty embankments; or marked the progress of the river in eating away its banks, in devouring little islands, or creating others. It is curious to observe the care with which the fellah at some points defends his little field from the encroachments of his troublesome friend the Nile. Piles of brushwood, rushes, and weeds, kept in place by long poles, are often heaped against the banks. There is always something to see and to notice; here a drove of lazy-looking buffaloes, immersing their huge bulk in the water; there a number of camels and asses with their owners, waiting for a ferry-boat; now a flight of pigeons; then a legion of aquatic birds. All kinds of craft, too, diversify the surface of the river, from the vast dahabiah with its house-like cabin, and sails more than a

hundred feet in length, to the little canoe impelled by a square yard of canvass.

Except in the immediate neighbourhood of Atfeh and Fouah, there are not very many palms on the Rosetta branch of the Nile; although it would be difficult to point out a place where some few of these trees do not show themselves, tapering near or amidst the scanty groves of mimosas and sycamores. The palm is certainly a beautiful tree, but it owes much of the admiration it receives to the character of the country it loves best. There is nothing else on the vast level plains of Lower Egypt, where other trees seem to shrink into shrubs, to distance the hot brazen sky and encourage the eye to look aloft. Take away the palm from the Delta, and I know not what race of men would consent to inhabit it.

Except in large cities, there are comparatively few minarets in Lower Egypt. Fouah, however, possesses twelve; in a state of dilapidation, like those of Rosetta. It is worth observing, that during the reign of Mohammed Ali most of the minor brick-built cities fell to ruin, and were succeeded by mud villages. A mighty leveller was this old man of Kavalla. Like most tyrants he put in practice the Communist theories in their harshest form, only that the sur-

plus wealth of the country, instead of being divided, was concentrated in his own hands. The history of the decline of Fouah has often been given, and I will not repeat it. Something similar has taken place in other cases; and it is difficult to say whether it is more pitiable to behold the miserable villages, or the deserted towns sinking by degrees into heaps of rubbish. A few neat white-washed houses, belonging to mudirs and sheikhs of villages, and one or two palaces as they are called, though really but so-so villas, sprinkle at wide intervals the green banks of the river.

Although on our present journey—having a special object—we did not linger long in these lower provinces, yet on former occasions we had become pretty well acquainted with them. There is a great straggling village on the western bank of the Nile, not many miles above Fouah, called Shibrakeet, near which I once fell upon a place that interested me. We were on a vagabond search for health or pleasure. A long causeway, terminating in a bridge over a canal and some important sluice-gates, conducted to the inland village of Kafr Mustanat, probably seldom visited by Europeans. A large, clean coffee-house, surrounded by a number of small huts,

stood near it. A colony of Ghawazees, or dancing-girls, was here established, not exactly for the purpose of attracting strangers. They had chosen this secluded spot as a kind of academy, where the young and ignorant might learn the graceful arts and allurements peculiar to their strange community.

A fat, frowsy dame—accustomed, no doubt, of old, herself to exhibit with the light fantastic hip—was at once mistress of the coffee-house and superintendent of the chaste education of the infant Ghawazee. Two pupils, probably first of the first form, were shown to us, and ordered to repeat some of their lessons. They were quite a credit to the establishment, and, though barely ten years old, had little to learn, except passion. Like two lovely automata, they went through every manœuvre of their elder sisters; but whilst the Arabs assembled swore with admiration and grunted out lascivious sighs, we could not help feeling saddened by beholding childhood thus profaned. The frowsy dame, who counted on being handsomely rewarded, watched our faces anxiously, and asked if we were displeased. New in the country, we made some objections, and were comically misunderstood. Had this accommodating lady been ac-

quainted with Shakspeare, she would have compressed her answer into one phrase,—

"Younger than they are happy mothers made;"

but, not being so learned, she entered into a variety of details, physiological and other, with which we could well have dispensed. Changing the subject, we inquired the origin of these charming children, and were told they had been bought from their fellâh mothers. At the time I doubted the fact, and believed them to have been stolen; but sales of children are not uncommon in the villages, where extreme misery triumphs over the strength of maternal affection.

It seems impossible to obtain a distinct idea of the origin and history of the so-called tribe of Ghawazees. Of course the nature of their occupation precludes the possibility of any unity of blood; but there are certainly traces of a distinct type, which reappears here and there in remarkable purity. Forms and faces cannot surpass in beauty those of the complete Ghawazee; and, wonderful to say, in spite of the life of debauchery these women lead, they *keep* far better than their more virtuous sisters. Does labour destroy beauty more effectually than vice? Or is it that the Ghawazee, leading a life of leisure

from her youth upwards; surrounded ever by some of the accidents of wealth—garments of fine tissue, ornaments of gold and silver,—feeding on stimulating food and drinking something more generous than the cold water of the Nile; her ears soothed by music, and her imagination spurred by amatory songs, and by communion with men rendered intelligent for a while by passion—under all these influences does the Ghawazee acquire a mental superiority, which acts outwardly, and successfully combats the fatal progress of decay? The hetairæ of ancient Greece retained their charms when those who, perhaps, eclipsed them as maidens had settled down into demure matrons, not lovely but respectable; and the same observation has been repeated on their modern descendants—"for instance, Ninon de l'Enclos." These are not satisfactory speculations. It might be possible, however, to explain the mystery to the honour of virtue, and to the advancement of our notions on female education.

The facts which have suggested these remarks are well known to all Egyptian residents; and it is scarcely necessary to allude to the celebrated Kutchuk Hanem, who, for I know not how many seasons, has withstood the admiration

of a whole procession of pilgrims to Gizeh. No doubt she will one of these days be pushed from her stool by some more youthful competitor, and compelled to become a Magdalen in spite of herself; but in those unrigid countries the daughters of the castanet are not driven to fall back on philosophy, piety, scandal-mongering, or the hospital. A new career opens when the old one has closed; and Safia, who has lately become a decent gentlewoman of Cairo, after twenty years of public life, is by no means an extraordinary instance. Most probably her wealth had something to do with finding her a respectable husband; but I venture to say that many an Arab, who might be fascinated by her talents for society or her glory, would turn away with contempt from a quiet widow-lady of equal age and fortune. We have seen similar things in Europe, where public opinion is more meddling and censorious, and where the excuse scarcely exists that virtuous women are mewed up in ignorance and inexperience.

The tribe, or rather corporation of dancing-girls, seem to have existed from the earliest times. They preserve traces of a distinct language, unless the few uncouth words peculiar to them ought not rather to be regarded as mere

slang. I am inclined to think there is some affinity between them and the gypsies,—the men who profess to be their parents often following precisely the same occupations as these vagabonds, being tinkers, smiths, makers of ornaments, especially of supposed magic rings. Kalah, the Jewish Almeh, whom I knew in Alexandria, once told me a curious story of two daughters of a Barmekide, the virtuous family so celebrated in the "Arabian Nights," and in the history of Bagdad. One of them was invincibly impelled by fate to adopt a dissolute life, and became the mother of the Ghawazee; the other was virtuous, but eloping with a wandering stranger became the mother of the Gagarees, or gypsies. I do not regard this, however, as a genuine tradition; but as an instance of the tendency in Oriental minds to impersonate facts, and base a substantive narrative upon a vague belief. Both the dancing-girls and the gypsies claim a descent from the Barmekides; but, as is well known, the former existed in the times of the Pharaohs: and I have often seen them performing their voluptuous evolutions within the circle of light thrown by my taper on the walls of the most ancient tombs of Upper Egypt.

The Ghawazees have never any fixed place

of residence, but travel about from city to city, and village to village, according, as economists would say, to the capricious fluctuations of demand. Wherever there is a religious festival or a fair—for pilgrims and merchants are not the most insensible to their attractions—they repair as industriously as flies and beggars. They are supposed, it is true, to be banished to Upper Egypt; but the edict was never effectually carried out, and when twice a-year business and piety attract their votaries to Tanta, the Ghawazees, or substitutes strongly resembling them, are never absent. Their tents always occupy the most conspicuous position; and nothing can exceed the audacious freedom with which they ply their trade. As might have been guessed, many of them yearly perform the pilgrimage to Mekka, and come back with the respectable title of Haggee, and a purse well filled by the contributions of saints absent from their families.

It is worth while to mention, as an illustration of manners, the real reason of the attempted exile of these lovely votaries of vice. No motive of morality prompted the measure. As long as Muslim prejudice had free play they were left in the undisturbed exercise of their vocation; but when Mohammed Ali, for political purposes,

found it necessary to repress the bigotry of his subjects, and even went so far as to bestow extraordinary and unjust privileges on Europeans, a very delicate question presented itself. It was bad enough to allow Christianity to quit the humble ass and ride upon horses; but when it came to meddle with, and almost monopolize the dancing-girls, the excitement and anger of the population was great. These women, too, were Muslimees; and a Muslimee incurs the penalty of death by intriguing with a man of different faith. Constant collisions and quarrels occurred, until the government compromised the matter by an edict, which, if it did not accomplish its apparent object, at least gave satisfaction to public opinion.

It often happens, as I have hinted, that a Ghawazee, having amassed a respectable fortune, marries some man not belonging to her tribe, and retires altogether into private life. Here the anathemas of society, not prone to condemn implacably in the East the immoralities which it creates, cease to pursue her. She is allowed to hide the cheek which pasha and fellâh, Muslim and Infidel, have tarnished by too familiar admiration, in peace behind the respectable burko; and though her history may be perfectly well known, no one

lifts up a stone against her. Perhaps, even, the less experienced dames, whom she meets at the bath and boldly invites to her house, may envy less her present prosperous condition than the life of unrestrained liberty of which she can talk so eloquently. Be this as it may, no one deems her acquaintance a disgrace; and, as has often been seen in other countries, the wealth amassed by the courtezan is distributed in great part among the poor by the retired—it would be, perhaps, too much to say—penitent sinner.

There were a great many adult Ghawazees at Kafr Mustanat, but I have rarely seen so few that could boast of remarkable beauty. The most gracious wore an inordinate quantity of rouge—this sisterhood all over the world covet the same permanent blush—and rejoiced in one magnificent black eye; in very truth "a piercer." The other must have been kicked out by a camel; but she took no pains to conceal its devastated orbit, and never suspected the horror which it created in our minds. When we rose to depart she pursued us with solicitations for money, and—not satisfied by our gifts, or because they were purely gratuitous—with unpolite reflections on our religion. Her sisters joined in the outcry, and were again joined

by a pack of savage mangy dogs. Clods of earth began to fly when we reached the bridge; and we were not sorry to have escaped so easily from the dancing academy of Kafr Mustanat.

CHAPTER III.

Reasons for stopping at Mohallet—the Close of Day—Sid Ahmed—the Fellâhs—Local Patriotism—Serfdom—Movement of the Population, how repressed—Fellâhs not hitherto properly described—Meaning of the word—Origin of the Fellâhs—Descendants of converted Copts—Climate of Egypt fatal to Strangers—Peculiar Pronunciations in Egypt—Personal Appearance of the Fellâh—not Ugly—his Physiognomy—Children of the Arabs—Bedawins disliked—People in a transition State—Costume of the Peasants.

To return to our voyage. Upon leaving Fouah, although without any reason for hurrying a-head, we should probably have sailed some hours after sunset, had not Sid Ahmed begged permission to visit his wife's relations at a place called Mohallet Abu Ali. On the eve of so prodigious a journey, such a boon could not be refused to a favourite servant; but I took the opportunity to remind Sid Ahmed that several years before he had exerted great eloquence to dissuade us from mooring at that very village, which he had been persuaded was a den of

thieves. We had not attended to his remonstrances, and sure enough had met with anything but a hospitable reception. Ahmed, too, had vowed that no possible consideration should induce him to set foot again in the place. But matrimony alters men's ideas in more ways than one; and as the fop decked himself out in fine silk garments to overawe his clownish relations, he actually maintained, with the respectful irony of an Arab servant, that we had brought insult upon ourselves by our own misconduct, and that the people of Mohallet were the most quiet and inoffensive race on the face of the earth.

Evening was coming on as we arrived. A few boats lay moored near the low flat shore. I scarcely ever remember to have seen a day draw towards its close under more tranquil auspices. The scene around, though common in Egypt, was most unlike anything that presents itself in other countries. The river, broad as a lake, flowed with a gentle rustle between two long streaks of land fringed with trees, that alone divided it from the sky. On the opposite bank we thought, at first, we saw a volume of black smoke, thinned now and then into nothing by a gust of wind. It was a vast flight of pigeons, gathering and dispersing in their

evening play over some village, buried beneath the near horizon. The sun was just sinking behind one long black horizontal cloud. A shower of beams, like fireworks, shot downwards and sideways at first; and then, suddenly changing their direction, rose in golden sheaves through all the western sky. Pale waves of light came floating into the grey zenith. Suddenly the orb of the sun, like an eye of fire, appeared for a moment glaring over the western bank with a threatening aspect; and when it finally vanished, a blast of northerly wind went sweeping up the river, which instantly was clothed with dancing and foaming waves. A tempestuous twilight at once succeeded the hushed day. The boats that were still pursuing their course lay to, and covered their quivering yards with men to take in sail. All sought shelter near the banks until the first fury of the gale was over, when several, with one corner of their canvass loosened and swelled out into a bag, went rushing by.

Sid Ahmed was, or rather had been, himself a fellâh, as the natives of the villages are called; but many years' residence in Alexandria had made quite a townsman of him in appearance. With the exception of a small portion of the people of Masr, themselves very far from being unmixed,

all the Muslim natives of Egypt are of the same origin. There, as elsewhere, the great cities are constantly replenished from the fields; though the movement of the population is determined by different causes from those that operate in Europe. The Egyptian, who loves and clings to his village as long as he is able, seeks Cairo and Alexandria, when oppressed beyond bearing, in order to be lost in the crowd. Prospects of an improved condition, of course, render the change of residence more palateable; but the impulse is rather one of fear than of hope. It must not be forgotten that, in the eye of the present government, the fellâh is, strictly speaking, a serf, and belongs to the soil as much as do the palm-trees. But no tradition sanctions this idea, and it finds constant opposition in practice. Hence rigorous decrees and bloody punishments. At a recent period it was scarcely possible for a fellâh to pass from one village to another without a written passport; fugitives were brought back and bastinadoed—the technical word is "nabooted"—most unmercifully; and death has been inflicted on persons convicted or accused of sheltering them. The system, however, as a new one, has never been applied in perfection; and, under one pretence or another, fresh streams

of fellâhs are constantly flowing into the great cities. Sometimes the authorities, in a fit of rigour, make a regular razzia on the new arrivals, and send them back bound neck and heels to their villages. In other cases, especially when long impunity or service with some European protects the offender, he is annoyed in a more indirect manner; and Sid Ahmed himself, though he can prove having duly paid his income-tax in Alexandria, is, from time to time, peremptorily called upon for his quota of certain long-standing arrears of the village of Seneet, which he left when a child. He resists payment, of course, with inflexible obstinacy, until resistance is no longer possible, and then sullenly hands over some petty instalment. He never hears of his village but in company with a call upon his purse. It is the very last place he would think of visiting; for he might suddenly find himself transformed from an elegant servant into a country where service is regulated by patriarchal laws, to a half-naked serf sweating at a sakia. Yet his eyes will sparkle if you speak of Seneet, and he will gravely maintain that it produces the most excellent dates, and is altogether the most lovely spot in Egypt.

The Egyptian in his improved condition—

as merchant, shopkeeper, or house-servant, mingling and assimilating with Turks and other strangers, in a gaudy and picturesque crowd—has often been the subject of study and description. But I do not find that the chief portion of the population of the country, scattered about in villages and hamlets amidst the palm-groves, have received sufficient attention. Travellers seem to have avoided as much as possible all contact with this vast mass of uncomplaining misery; or, at any rate, to have examined it from a distance with mingled pity and disgust. Scarcely here and there do we meet with a few general notices of "the fellâhs," (pronounced by some tourists "fellows") an anecdote or two, an isolated trait of manners, little more than enough to suggest their existence, and excite sympathy with their condition. It will be worth while to observe them with more attention, and endeavour, if possible, to strike off their true characteristics. For my own part I must confess that I went out to Egypt with a prejudice in their favour, which long experience has not induced me to throw aside. My father, who had trodden that country before, when travelling was a serious undertaking, in days recent, it is true, in point of time, but already distant by the wonderful

changes which even a season now brings forth, had not failed, although his object was different from mine, to turn aside his attention very frequently to the fellâhs. Accordingly, in his book we find none of those expressions of contempt and aversion, none of those quaint appreciations, which flow so glibly from the lips and are often found under the pens of the tourists of these degenerate days. My opinion, therefore, was already, to a certain extent, formed before personal experience came into play; and when convinced that there was no reason for changing it, I had nothing to do but to bring into order the thousand different observations which a prolonged residence naturally suggested, and which expanded and coloured the preconceived sketch.

Fellâh means labourer, and especially agricultural labourer. The Arabic plural is fellâheen; but I shall generally call them the fellâhs. There are various opinions of their origin. My own is that they are mainly descendants of the Copts, converted at or after the introduction of El-Islam, and mixed with settlers from Arabia and from the neighbouring deserts; and that when the Turks apply to them the insulting epithet of "People of Pharaoh," they are not very far from the truth. I disbelieve,

equally, in the total elimination and in the total extirpation of any race. Conquest and armed emigration into populated lands may dispossess great proprietors and ruin middle classes; but both brutal Turks and intelligent Arabs have always laid equal stress on the possession of the indigenous peasantry and on that of the land they cultivate. We must not suppose that when the Christian population were converted to so prolific a faith as that of El-Islam they ceased to propagate; and it is easy to see that there is one uniform groundwork in the whole race, from the Mediterranean to a little beyond Koom Ombos in Upper Egypt. The resemblance of the fellâhs to the Copts is so striking, especially in the villages, that it is absolutely impossible to distinguish them; and the portraits of both peoples may constantly be recognised in the ancient sculptures and paintings.

There is a peculiar reason for believing that the inhabitants of the Valley of the Nile have remained nearly the same from the very oldest periods. The climate is fatal to strangers in the second degree. Franks, Greeks, and Turks from the north; Abyssinians, Gallas, and Negroes from the south, are in vain transplanted to this land inimical to exotics. Their progeny

rarely survive. The fact was so well ascertained by the Memlooks, that it became a custom with them to recruit their numbers by adoption. It is probable that the same has held good in all ages; and that, however great the mixture may have been at various periods, the original race has sufferçd few important changes, save those of time and different institutions. A few fellâh families would soon repeople the whole valley, whilst hosts of foreigners would be devoured in a century. I may notice here that the Egyptian organs of speech are peculiarly rugged and intractable, and that in adopting a new language they have modified its pronunciation. They cannot produce the sounds of *p* or *j*. Pasha becomes basha in their mouths, and Jebel, Ghebel; and whilst the true Hejazi enunciates the letter kaf with elegant unction, as in the word *okod*, "sit down," the vulgar Alexandrian says *ogod;* and the Caireen, like the Syrian, escapes the difficulty by eliding the letter altogether; thus, *o'od.*

The fellâhs in general appear to be built of unburnt brick. Men and women have the same uniform greyish-brown complexion, as if they had just issued from the hands of the Muslim creator, who made them from *teen*, or

the mud of the Nile. This colour, warming sometimes on the cheeks into a dark-red flush, varies, of course, in intensity in various provinces, more or less neighbours of the sun; but I have known natives of Koom Ombos, possibly issued from recent immigrants, nearly as fair as the inhabitants of the Delta. In general, however, the people of Upper Egypt are more swarthy than those of Lower. For some fifteen miles north of the Cataracts the natives are black as Nubians, but still retain Egyptian features, speak Arabic, and disclaim all admixture of Berberi blood. It is from this province that most of those boatmen come, who, on account of their dark colour, are hastily described as Nubians by strangers.

I have somewhere read a very harsh judgment on the personal appearance of the fellâhs, representing them, with few exceptions, as intensely ugly. This is not the case. They are heavy, coarse-featured men, it is true; their physiognomy is seldom lighted up by intelligence; but there is nothing repulsive about them. Generally speaking, the expression of their countenance is one of childish simplicity, with an occasional gleam of clownish cunning. One of their chief physical peculiarities is the

heavy eyelid, that protects and half closes a very keen eye. The dazzling reflexion of the sun from their parched fields during a great portion of the year may exaggerate this defect, and induce a habit of winking. It belongs, however, to the race; and in the inhabitants of the towns becomes a beauty, giving a languid, pleasing expression, to the long almond-shaped eye in moments of repose. It is curious to notice, however, how, when the Egyptian is moved by passion, his eyes acquire a goggle shape; the heavy eyelid shrinks, and the ball seems to start forward. They sometimes say themselves, "his eyes became round," instead of "he was angry." This is not the only respect in which their physiognomy exhibits its mobility. The apparently rigid nostril distends and flashes, as it were, to express every kind of excitement; the placid mouth—model of that of the Sphynx—becomes contorted to a most ludicrous extent; and the scanty beard, unfolding like a fan, assumes quite a meteoric appearance. All this agitation, however, is usually calmed down again, like the Virgilian storm, before one can say Jack Robinson—*dicto citius.*

The fellâhs often call themselves Children of the Arabs, as if claiming descent from that war-

like race; to whom, however, they bear little affinity and less affection. Nothing can exceed the dislike, nay, hatred, of the agricultural population of Lower Egypt for the ragged heroes of the desert. They are now, it is true, protected from their depredations—strong governments tolerate no rival plunderers—but most of them remember well the time when scarcely the very central provinces of the Delta were safe. Villages in the neighbourhood of Cairo, even—Matarieh, for instance—were compelled to fortify themselves in a rude manner, by massive wooden gates, and by building their houses back outwards in a circle, just as horses when wolves are abroad collect noses sociably together, and turn their hind-quarters to the enemy. The Arabs (whom we call Bedawins—somewhat as foreigners say *mans* for *men*, *oxes* for *oxen*—the received singular being Bedawee and the plural Arab), were the more dangerous, because they never put themselves on the footing of declared enemies. On market-days, then as now, they penetrated into the country in all directions, buying and selling, at the same time that they spied out the nakedness of the land; and they as often rendered themselves obnoxious by robbing a hen-roost, as by making a foray

lance in hand. A general opinion of their courage and ferocity, as well as the want of arms, prevented the fellâhs from attempting reprisals. They submitted with tolerable patience, not only to be robbed, but to be bullied and over-reached in all dealings by these sallow freebooters. Even now the insolence of the Bedawins is proverbial, except when they penetrate into large walled towns. Then it is their turn to truckle and be humble, and to submit to the unsparing ridicule and rough practical jokes of Masree and Iskenderaneh.

A lad who accompanied us when we went to Siwah was subdued, as soon as the desert air breathed upon his cheek, into meekness and humility. He looked upon Yunus and Saleh as two venerable patriarchs, whom it would be a sin to treat without proper respect, and never addressed either of them but as "O my uncle!" When, however, on our return, we had fairly passed the line of fortifications, and were amongst the well-known windmills, a couple of Bedawins happened to pass and ask news of the west. Every cock can crow upon his own dunghill; and the only answer vouchsafed was a string of invectives which I have not the courage even to abridge. The poor lad was

revenging himself for the terrors of six weeks. In the same manner the townspeople generally revenge themselves for the awe which the Bedawins in their own element contrive to excite.

In Upper Egypt, where the races are, perhaps, more mixed, and where villages are more commonly found inhabited by people in a transition state between Bedawins and fellâhs, who combine the cultivation of the ground with the breeding of camels, this inimical feeling has always existed in a less degree. The Saydees, likewise, are less effeminate than their brethren the Wastanees and the Baharees. They have a great fondness for warlike weapons; and, in spite of the various edicts of disarmament, possess guns, and spears, and swords, and will use them at a pinch.

The costume of the fellâhs is marvellously simple. In the majority of cases it consists only of a long blue loose-sleeved gown, of cotton stuff, descending to the middle of the leg, and generally girded at the loins by a rope or sash. Instead of this many have a brown woollen garment of the same form; and some add in winter a coarse kind of woollen pelisse, with alternate stripes of white and brown; or

a comfortable hooded cloak, called a jelabiyeh, so termed, probably, because commonly worn by the jelabs or slave-dealers. Such as can afford it wear short calico drawers. The head-dress is generally a white takiyeh, or else a libdeh or pointed cap of brown felt, around which a wilderness of dirty rags is sometimes twisted in order to form a turban. I never happened to see a fellâh in a new dress, and suppose that such a sight must be of rare occurrence. The most respectable of them show numerous patches on every portion of their garments, and very frequently their clothes are tattered out of all form; and I used to puzzle myself to guess how they ever could get out of them, until I learned that they never do get out. A few, who have attained by wonderful industry and good fortune to the possession of some property—sheikhs of villages, servants, or *protégés* of great men, contrive to appear in better style. Their gowns, always open in front, instead of revealing a weather-beaten skin, sometimes tattooed, ostentatiously exhibit white or coloured waistcoats, with a serried row of small buttons of the same material; and the sleeves are turned up, lest the existence of the coarse muslin shirt,

which has no collar, might not be suspected. Shoes are very rarely worn, even by those in comparatively easy circumstances. The fellâh walks barefooted over field and desert, whilst the Bedawee shuffles along in down-at-heel slippers.

CHAPTER IV.

Female Dress—Tattooing—Beauty—Dirt—Old Age and Childhood—Marriage in the Villages—Divorces—Marriage Ceremonies—A gay Lothario—Matrimonial Experiences of a Fellâh, related by himself.

The fellâha women wear a blue skirt, of the same form with that of the men, but somewhat longer and of more transparent materials; so that if they were particularly squeamish they would shrink from passing between a stranger and the light. Over their heads they throw a mantle, either of the same stuff or else of checked linen; and one corner, kept in position by hands or teeth, serves to veil two-thirds of the face, leaving one eye, often the only one, uncovered. Generally speaking, they are without ornaments; but some wear necklaces or collars of thick wire, bracelets and anklets, ear-rings and nose-rings; also coins hanging down between the eyes when they have a burko, or face-veil. They tattoo the forehead,

lips, and various parts of the face, as well as the arms; and a blue star often attracts the eye to where the opening in front reveals all the unelaborateness of the costume of these deep-bosomed beauties. This practice of tattooing, generally followed by the women and by many of the men, is condemned as sinful by rigid Muslims; and Derweesh used often to regret that his arms had been thus disfigured when a child. The operation is performed, not without incantations, by the gipsy women, who pretend thereby to preserve children from innumerable imaginary disorders.

There is something massive about the beauty of Egyptian countrywomen. Their faces are of a short oval, like that of the young Bacchus. The expression of their eyes, which have space to develope their voluptuous outline, crushed slightly, as in the case of the men, by a heavy lid and long lashes, is often stiffened, if I may so speak, by the black border of kohl. It would be difficult, however, to imagine more beautiful eyes than those that sometimes flash upon you in the villages. There is a promise of heaven in them; often belied, however, by the earthly reality of the full pouting lips of swarthy red. Except that in some of the larger curves

there is too great an evidence of muscle, and that the breasts are early wearied with child-feeding, no forms can surpass those of the fellâhas. Parisian *bottines* never confined such exquisite feet; and those hands that dabble in cow-dung would, in Europe, be caressed all day by lovers, and startle the artist as the revelation of his long-sought ideal.

Kings Cophetuas, prone to love beggar-maids, are not of everyday occurrence; and I have rarely found people to sympathise with me in my admiration of these dirty Venuses. For it must be confessed they are as dirty as their occupations make them. Not that they have any special fondness for filth; for they wash their persons daily, and their clothes as often as might be expected, considering that they rarely possess a change. But, in spite of their efforts, they are always begrimed more or less; and the odour of the dye used in their garments is so repulsive, that only travellers possessed of cosmopolitan nostrils can venture to approach them.

It is worthy of remark, that nothing is more rare than respectable-looking old age among fellâha women. They all shrivel early into hags. Neither is there any beautiful childhood of either sex; and it is really wonderful

that the miserable pot-bellied creatures, covered with dirt, and sores, and flies, which crawl about the dunghills of the villages, should grow up into fine hearty young men and charming maidens.

Marriages in the villages are often conducted with a great want of formality, not because simpler tastes are more prevalent than in town, but because the parties cannot afford the expense. To make up for the absence of the various zeffehs, the entertainments, &c. which constitute the respectability of a marriage, the fellâhs indulge in an immense amount of palaver and discussion. Of course, the subject is what is sometimes called the dowry, but what is, strictly speaking, the price of the bride. Parents generally make a good thing of a pretty daughter. Instead of spending what they receive in fitting her out, according to the custom of the towns, they hand her over almost shiftless to the bridegroom, who is bound to furnish her with a new gown and a head-veil. Sometimes, especially in large places, a variety of processions take place; but as a rule, when once the business part of the affair is settled, the bride, after being well scrubbed, is almost at once conveyed to the house of her future lord.

A camel or a buffalo, bearing a kind of platform covered with carpets and other adornings on its back, carries the muffled girl and the playmates she is about to quit, scarce nubile playmates, chattering and laughing, round and round the few streets of the village. A crowd of women follow on foot, singing and gesticulating. At length it is thought proper to halt before the impatient bridegroom's house. The poor fellow is turned out to amuse himself by a visit to the mosque, and a kind of romp on the way back, when there is much sham fighting with sticks, and beating of drums, and piping and singing, with many halts, the whole illuminated—for it is now dark—by torches. When at length the house is reached, the women are summarily turned out, and the bridegroom, who makes show of resistance, is turned in by main force. A mud lamp, stuck in a niche, now reveals the face, which he is supposed not to know, although he knows it well, for girls are seldom or never veiled in the villages. Perhaps this circumstance may account for the fact that marriages are more durable than in the cities, where wives are bought "in a poke." Meanwhile, half the village is collected without, the men singing,

and the women dancing a slow dance with one or two steps, totally different from the performance of the Ghawazees. The entertainment continues until a late hour of the night.

It is not unfrequent for cousins to be early betrothed, and to be married as soon as they arrive at the age of puberty, with but a nominal dowry. In this case the ceremony is almost entirely a family one. The two fathers settle the fortunate day; the mothers club to deck the virgin bride; a few friends are called in to witness and bless the ceremony; and the two children, who still call to one another "O my cousin!" throughout life become one. To the honour of the fellâha women be it said, that second marriages are considered by them disreputable, and long widowhoods are of very common occurrence.

When a marriage is about to take place in a fellâh family, the female relations of the bridegroom seize the opportunity to pay a visit to the nearest great town, in order to make the necessary purchases. They take with them a small wooden box, painted green, or simply a tray, which the principal personage carries on his head. Thus they traverse the streets of Cairo or Minieh, for example, in faint imitation of a

procession, uttering the shrill cry of joy called the zughareet, which may be described as a kind of gurgling shriek. I have often been witness of their purchases, which rarely consist of more than a single handkerchief, a yard or two of coarse gauze, and perhaps a piece of calico. As they are generally simple people, it is not difficult for the dealers to cheat them, in spite of their bold attempts at beating down the price asked. I heard two poor women once bargain an hour for three dras of twopenny calico, on which Mr. Halil contrived to make a farthing above a fair profit.

These simple manners are entirely the result of poverty; for the whole Egyptian race — it may be said, the whole Eastern race — are infected with a rage for display: and here it may be well to observe that their ideas of economy and saving are very different from ours, perhaps more philosophical. If a miser be a man who accumulates money for money's sake alone, that he may die upon a heap of gold, there are no misers in Egypt. Many individuals, however, are parsimonious during a portion of their existence, that they may be able to indulge in some reasonable enjoyment, some cherished desire, some ridiculous piece of ostentation, at a given

period. I knew a man who worked many years, and stinted himself, and spunged upon his friends, like a true Harpagon, in order to amass a capital of a hundred pounds or so, more than half of which he dissipated with right royal magnificence on the occasion of his wedding with a smutty-faced one-eyed girl, whom it was his good pleasure to select for her reputed beauty. Others lay by in order to perform the pilgrimage to Mekka; others, in order to build a fountain, or feed the poor at the death of their grandfather: but the idea that they are but encamped in this world is too firmly impressed to allow of any indefinite piling of piastre upon dollar. Even the desire to leave their children well to do in the world is imperfectly developed; and perhaps we cautious Northerns might do our children more service by spending, in working out their faculties, a portion of that money which we (I mean, they) lay up for them in the three per cents.

The practice of polygamy is not common,—nay, almost unknown in the villages. Some few Sheikhs indulge in the perilous luxury; but, in general, prudence or morality suggests that one wife is sufficient for one man. However, as the female population seems to be redundant, many

girls become united to wandering husbands,—sailors, for example,—who thus possess harims at convenient distances along the whole course of the Nile. Town-dwellers also go a-seeking for partners among the pretty girls of the villages, and often carry off the choicest specimens.

Sid Ahmed had married a young fellâha girl, and, from all I have learned, was not unfortunate in his choice. Though she is his first wife, it seems probable he will remain with her. But this is an extraordinary instance. A real or adopted son of Alexandria is generally more fastidious, and does not settle down until after one or two divorces. In the villages, this immoral practice is far less common. There young couples join together, as in prosy Europe, "for better, for worse;" and the flower once culled is not thrown aside because it may fade. I once heard a townsman and a countryman relating their matrimonial experiences. The former had married a girl, one of whose eyes was smaller than the other,—his sense of proportion was offended, and he divorced her; then he took a one-eyed maiden, who never got ready his supper in time, and likewise divorced her; next he fell in with a gadder-about, whose feet preferred treading the neighbour's dunghill to the house-

mat; and after that with a painted beauty, who wore more trinkets than he paid for, and had always something to whisper to old women who came for unacknowledged purposes. By this time parents began to fight shy of him, and he was obliged to take up with a widow; and then to fall back on one of his old wives—not the best, who had in the meantime been married to another man and divorced. He tried polygamy, but had good reason to suspect that a man with many wives has wives with many husbands.

The fellâh, named Haroun, said that when he came of age to marry—which was when the barber's wife began to throw date-stones at him from behind a wall, and then betray herself by an affected giggle—not finding a suitable match in his own village, he travelled through the neighbouring districts until he met with a very poor couple who had an only daughter. He made his propositions, was accepted, and, after the necessary delays, found himself possessed of a wife. A detail of all his comic tribulations need not be given. Suffice it to say that the bride—too young to have a witness within her of the propriety of her being handed over to the rough tenderness of a stranger—was as restive as a colt ignorant of the halter.

During the first half of the honeymoon Haroun's face became so ornamented with scratches that no friend could recognise him. He gravely applied for redress to the parents, who promised to scold and intercede. If they did so, it was without effect; and the bridegroom returned to his native village with a new father and mother, and a wife whom it was as dangerous to approach as a hedgehog tied in a bag. Had he been alone with her, matters might have been smoothed at the expense of a few tears; but in the midst of his remonstrances the old people would invariably rush to the rescue, and accuse the poor bewildered man of assassinating their daughter. Under these circumstances he consulted the Kadee of the village, who was esteemed of good counsel.

"The matter is easy, O Haroun," said the Kadee, having heard an unvarnished statement of the case. "Pretend thou to give up the matter as a bad job, and go out as if to work. The old people will soon grow weary of staying at home, having all their new relations to visit. Watch thy opportunity, and slip back armed with a good stick as soon as they are out. Let the stick be at least two fingers in thickness; and when thou hast locked thyself in,

fall to in the name of the Prophet, and beat thy wife well: beat her till she shrieks for mercy, beat her till thou drawest blood—zing, zong, Wallah! Billah! and, by my beard, she will become as amiable as a young buffalo that feedeth out of its master's hand."

The bridegroom did as he was advised, and, having nearly committed murder, was acknowledged as lord paramount; so that when the parents came back they found their daughter humble as a dove just fluttering after capture, with one eye beaming love and the other bound up by a rag.

"In this way," said the narrator, "was I saved from the necessity of a divorce."

CHAPTER V.

Relations of the Fellâh to the Government—Provinces of the Delta—Uncultivated Land—Irrigation Reform in Egypt—the Barrage—Why Improvements are not received by the Fellâhs—Motives to Action—Turkish and Native Governors—Nazirs—Curious Circular—Anecdote of a Tour of Inspection—An Unpleasant Guest—Sheikh-el-Beled—Corporal Punishment—How Taxes are collected with the Stick—Appointment of the Sheikhs.

The narrative of our uneventful journey in the Valley of the Nile will constantly introduce the fellâh as a principal character. Before proceeding, therefore, it will be well to throw together a few general observations on his relations to the government, and on the way in which the affairs of the country are managed. These observations are principally based on experiences in the districts which we are now traversing, and which form the most appropriate theatre of study; for the Delta, and the provinces that fade off

into the desert on either hand, contain considerably more than one-half of the whole population of Egypt. The most densely-peopled districts are near the river and in the northern half of the island. Towards the sea and the desert there are vast tracts of uncultivated ground, year by year invaded by fields of sand and by salt-marshes. It has been calculated that one-third of the land immediately available for cultivation is entirely abandoned for want of hands. Other tracts, of immense extent, might be made productive by bringing water to them; and it was to attain this end in the Delta that the Barrage was planned.

The Arabs tell a story of a man who shaved his beard to make his hair grow, and then wept because he had neither beard nor hair. Mohammed Ali something resembled this man. He first depopulated the country by conscriptions, and artificial famines created by an inflexible monopoly of food; he ruined agriculture by drawing away or exterminating the labourers; and then was frightened by the deserts he had created. To repair the mischief, instead of sending the people back to their legitimate occupations, he resolved to reclaim lands that had lain uncultivated for centuries, and produced further

damage by dragging away fresh gangs of fellahs from the villages to build a stupendous dam, which was to aid in distributing an artificial inundation with a united generosity and discrimination unknown to the Nile. Of course, it would be a great advantage if the immense amount of manual labour now spent in raising dribblets of water could be relieved and devoted to other purposes; and this was one of the subsidiary objects of the Barrage. But the same end could have been better attained by other means, as was shown by Ibrahim Pasha. That warlike farmer, enlightened by his own interests, established stationary steam-engines on his estates; he has since been imitated by other members of the same money-getting family; and the system is found to answer admirably. Meanwhile the Barrage, which, even if good in principle—a doubtful matter—was ludicrously disproportioned to the finances and state of civilisation in Egypt, has for years interfered with the navigation of the Nile, and seems not likely, for some time at least, to be put to the test. A prodigious system of canals, as yet traced out only upon paper, is a necessary part of the project; and it is difficult to say where the army of navigators required for their exca-

vation can be levied, without inflicting almost irreparable mischief on the country.

At once the instrument and victim of these mighty improvements, the fellâh lives on in unshaken belief in his shattered shadoofs, crazy sakias, and well-muscled arms. These Pharaonic works neither interest nor enlighten him. He sees in them only a powerful engine of oppression. Would he be equally insensible to a model water-wheel or an improved plough? Possibly: but the experiment has not been tried; at least with this necessary condition—freedom to use the acquired knowledge for immediate and personal advantage. I can perfectly sympathise with the fellâh who opposes impenetrable stupidity to instruction which is intended only to make him a more useful serf, and render him liable to greater oppression. The poor fellow wants money for himself, not for you; and if an implacable struggle for wealth is the bane of civilised communities, it is only by giving it free play that barbarism can be educated. Man must be a very vicious and contemptible animal, for he makes no progress unless spurred by his evil, or, at any rate, his least respectable passions. Ambition, cupidity, love of ease and pleasure—these are the great

motives to civilisation. When the incoherent result so called is produced, it is time enough to appeal to nobler instincts; for such appeals made in vain would only generate disgust and discouragement. It is not necessary for young societies to know that the very principles which make their success, followed too long in spite of the preachings of amiable theorists, must inevitably bring ruin on the splendid fabric which at first they contrived to create.

But these speculations take us away from the fellâhs, who do not possess what modern moralists tell us is still man's sole motive to action — the hope of acquiring wealth. They love gold, it is true, and talk of it with passion; but it is as they talk of the ginn-guarded treasures of the earth or the cloud prospects of the heavens. To them it is almost a fabulous thing. They have no idea, at least no hope, of bettering their condition. Wealth, even that moderate amount of it which is required to make a man respectable, never appears at the end of the short vista of their lives. Accidental exceptions, of course, occur here and there; but in general the Egyptian peasant can never expect to rise, except to be a tool of oppression to his fellows.

The great provinces of Egypt are governed

by Turks; but the minor districts into which these provinces are divided rejoice in native rulers, called Nazirs, of genuine fellâh origin. Every Arab, says the proverb, is a Pharaoh to those below him. We must not be unjust. What else could be expected? If John the footman is bullied by his master, nothing short of Christianity can prevent him from kicking the shoe-black. Besides, the individuals chosen for these important posts are naturally flatterers and creatures of the great men, who often require proofs of devotion not likely to be given but by the most degraded.

The word Nazir may be translated, Petty governor; but it is applied freely to the ruler of a district, the head of a little quarantine station, and to the superintendent of any estate.

When European speculators, consuls, or merchants, farm an estate, they appoint over each village, or group of villages, a Nazir, Levantine or Muslim. This person transacts all the business of the estate, collecting the rent or tribute, or produce, and paying the taxes direct to Government. The following curious "Order" was sent, not many years ago, to the Nazirs on the European farms: —

"Translation of an Order of his Highness the Viceroy of Egypt, in Arabic, addressed to the agent of Sig. * * *:—

"MR. AGENT,—You know that, according to old agreement, you are bound to pay in cash one-fifth of the tribute of the lands of your village in the province of ——. Now, as I have to disburse six months' pay to my troops—a pressing case—and as I have not enough money in my treasury, either to do this or to suffice for my daily necessary expenses; in consequence, over and above the said fifth to be paid immediately, you are requested to pay five per cent on the whole tribute, which is of ninety purses and fifty-four piastres. At five per cent, this is four purses and two hundred and fifty piastres. I hope you will make haste to pay the whole immediately into the treasury, or at the latest on the 15th of Giamaseker, the period fixed and established for all, so that I may be able to give the above-mentioned six months' pay to my troops. On your intelligence being made acquainted with this edict, I have no doubt you will hasten to pay all I ask in cash, and that you will not deviate from this measure, nor contradict my will."

Letters containing, like this, a singular mixture of entreaty and command, were sent to all the persons in similar situations under Europeans. The native Nazirs were admonished to exert themselves with far less circumlocution, and with no affectation of pointing out the object of the extraordinary supply demanded, no allusion to the poor troops, and no smothered hint about "daily necessary expenses." Great activity was forthwith displayed throughout the country; the Nazirs threatened and bullied, and a fair sum was collected as required "in cash:" but the army was, as usual, paid in orders on the treasury, practically at eighteen months' date, and the usurious generalissimo, Ibrahim Pasha, discounted them at the rate of twenty per cent.

Once upon a time, this same Effendina Sirasker, Ibrahim Pasha, of vigorous memory, made a tour of inspection through his scattered domains of the Delta. A steamer, turned out by some crack English builder, carried him rapidly from point to point; and no announcement preceded him except the smoke of the funnel, seen miles away in that level country. At length he arrived at Kafr Zeiat, went ashore, made a rapid inspection of his factories, and, more or less satis-

fied, started in a few hours. The Nazir, Abderrahman Effendi, and his staff, breathed again when the paddles were in motion, and watched with pleasure the fairy little steamer as it breasted the current, and went away steadily as for Cairo. Then, like true Muslims hearing the *adán*, they leisurely performed their ablutions, and with hearts made more religious than usual by fear, began to recite the prayers of I know not how many *fethas*. But scarcely had night fallen, when the red eye of "the fire-ship" came glaring round a point of land: there was no look-out to behold: "Eeza! stopa!"—there was no ear to hear. The terrible Pasha leaped ashore—rushed to his factory; all was deserted. A horde of cawasses brought the trembling delinquents to the presence. "What were ye doing, *pezawenks?*" 'We were at prayers." "At prayers, were ye? at prayers!" thundered the conqueror of Syria. "I 'll teach ye to attend to the affairs of Allah, and neglect mine. Down with them!" It is difficult to ascertain the accurate statistics of beatings in Egypt. So many of these executions are reported to end in death, that sometimes I hesitate to believe; although, to be sure, there are dozens of well-established instances. A thou-

sand blows are no joke. The pious Abderrahman, according to my informant, succumbed; and another Nazir ruled in his stead.

In Upper Egypt, a very respectable old gentleman of the same class, who had no reason to think he had given cause of displeasure, received one day the visit of an amiable, soft-spoken personage from Cairo, armed with full powers to represent his Highness Ahmet Pasha. The guest was welcomed with politeness and hospitality—not unmixed, of course, with apprehension; and a splendid supper refreshed him after his long journey. When the meal was concluded and hands were washed, the new-comer, as he delicately parted his well-trimmed moustache with the amber mouth-piece of the offered pipe, said: "Now, to business. With infinite regret I inform thee, my master! that I have come hither the bearer of orders to give thee five hundred blows immediately on my arrival. It will be better for both parties to dispatch this unpleasant affair as speedily as possible. Thou wilt allow me, therefore, to issue the necessary orders. Ali, Giaffar, do your duty!" The astounded Nazir roared for mercy; but ere the first spiral whiff of smoke from the visitor's elegantly pursed lips

had reached the rafters, the operation had commenced, and it was nearly over before a second pipe was required.

From these anecdotes it will be seen that the office of Nazir is no sinecure; and it is perhaps natural that men who are themselves subject to such arbitrary treatment should go and do likewise to their inferiors. In a less princely way, but with equal severity, do the Nazirs treat their subordinates, and especially the Sheikhs of the villages. These again, it is true, in order to ease the smart, make free with the shoulders below them; so that a cuff from the Pasha of Pashas eddies away sometimes to the very depths of the population, and is felt in its consequences from the Bahairah to the Saïd. It is impossible to calculate how many square feet of human back used to require poulticing within a few days after one of Mohammed Ali's interviews with his naughty children.

This subject of beating is unpleasant, and I will dismiss it at once. The stick governs China, says Montesquieu; the naboot governs Egypt. It is a mistake to suppose that the punishment is always inflicted on the soles of the feet. I believe it is more common to horse the

patients in true Eton style. Few men can boast of not having smarted at one or other extremity; if, indeed, impunity be a subject of congratulation. The fellâhs are proud of the number of blows they receive, because they generally suffer in a good cause—the refusal to pay excessive taxes. These "village Hampdens" know perfectly well that tranquil payment would only generate increased demands; and they rarely come down with the money until they have been down themselves. It is curious to see the quiet family way in which this important matter is transacted, in the palm-shaded agora of some sequestered hamlet; and how one sufferer, having paid his double quarterly contribution, goes and squats down, as well as he is able, to see the same game played over again with another. His countenance, though still wincing with pain, betrays, nevertheless, a consciousness of duty performed; and whilst accepting a pipe from some expectant rate-payer, he slily congratulates himself on having saved the few fuddahs which he had held in reserve under his tongue, in case the torture became too exquisite. Meanwhile the Sheikh, burly and fat, with paternal solicitude and main appeals to Allah and his Prophet, exhorts all whom it may con-

cern to think of their latter ends; and having collected at length about the sum required, retires from the scene, hugging himself in the hope that he can keep back a reasonable proportion. But the inevitable naboot again comes into play, and the Nazir avenges the poor fellâh in the most satisfactory manner. To this tune the dollars travel gently towards the treasury, and used of old to arrive about in time to buy Miss Nefeesa a necklace of Orient pearls, or Madame Nazlet a service of plate from Storr and Mortimer's—as now to furnish a succession of flimsy palaces, or provide an elegant *campanella* for the vice-royal breed of pigeons.

The Sheikhs of the villages, sharing the common lot of their people, are liable to punishments other than nabooting, and more unpleasant because less expeditiously despatched. They may be sentenced, for example, to the galleys; that is, to work in chains in the dockyard of Alexandria, or in the forts at Aboukir: and it is not unusual, in case they have been guilty of a very heinous offence, as making false returns to the census, to parade them about in some public place, Tanta fair, or the Cairo bazars, on donkeys, with their faces turned to the tail. A crier

precedes this moving pillory, proclaiming the crimes of the sufferers, and thus admonishing the public: "Beware, O good people, of imitating their offence." It is curious to observe that this punishment brings with it no contempt; and the Sheikhs often return from their chains to resume the post temporarily abdicated, as if nothing had happened. One of them rather boasted than complained to me that he had served his three years. What wonder, when the Verres of the Sherhich, Abderrahman Bey, had just made a triumphant progress to his old governorship, after having been chained side by side with him for the same period!

Apropos of these galley-slaves; it happened, during one of Mohammed Ali's last visits to his dockyard,—at the period when his intellectual powers having faded before his physical,—they were compelled to fill his scabbard with a sword of lath, lest he might be tempted to hack and hew at his faithful servants,—that the poor old prince was moved to exercise the royal prerogative of mercy. Despising the routine which he had himself established, he raised his voice and cried, "Ye are all free; go your ways!" This general amnesty took the courtiers by sur-

prise; and no less so the galley-slaves. The latter first recovered their presence of mind and began knocking off their chains. Others took to flight as they were. Murderers, thieves, bankrupts, rebellious servants, unexact Sheikhs, extortionate governors, the quarries of justice and the victims of caprice, all began to break away indiscriminately. Some vigorous person saw the danger, and whispering orders to lead away the old Viceroy, whose hawk-eye still flashed with the enthusiasm of a last exertion of power, put a stop to this general gaol-delivery. Several hundreds, however, had already got away,—the worst of the lot,—and for many days there was a regular hunt in Alexandria for escaped convicts. Most were caught again, though some got off clear. It was thought decent to carry out the act of mercy to a certain extent. As usual, however, in Egypt, the boon of liberty was granted, not exactly to those who deserved, but to those who could pay for it. The Sheikhs were for the most part in the latter category, and returned to their villages, to which absence had, perhaps, somewhat endeared them.

The Sheikh-el-Beled arrives at his enviable position in various ways: sometimes by direct

appointment of the Government; at others, being named by the Nazir or Moudir. The post, however, has a tendency to become hereditary; and possibly, if this should ultimately be the case, it would be fortunate. It is true that, according to the Eastern fable, coinciding with the last results of European reason, the fowls were foolish who took an egg, saying, "whatever comes from this egg shall be king over us;" and lo! the egg was the egg of a crocodile! Still, under present circumstances, a temporary benefit would be the result; and if unborn generations should complain of the introduction of so absurd a system, it would be in very good and numerous company. Old age has ever to pay the bills, and suffer for the excesses of youth; and in this world advanced societies are always crippled by the faults and vices of wise ancestors. A vast body of hereditary Sheikhs might, in many conceivable ways, interpose between the Government and the people; but as I have no mission to propose a new Reform Bill for Egypt, these and many other ideas may as well remain undeveloped.

The question of the Tanzimat, about which so much discussion has been of late, seems settled

for a time, and does not require a detailed discussion here. However, I may observe, that a factitious importance seems to have been given by the partizans of the Egyptian Government to the exercise of the right of life and death, in as far, at least, as protection to Europeans is concerned. We are protected sufficiently by the stick, and do not require the assistance of the halter. If any case were to occur requiring the application of the punishment of death, the delay of a few weeks to obtain a warrant from Constantinople would be of no consequence. Justice does not even pretend to be remarkably expeditious in Egypt; and when it becomes so by direct interference of the Government, every resident can recite histories without number, in which the blow being struck at random, has hit the wrong man. I have referred more than once to the fact that death has been inflicted on a man accused of harbouring a fugitive fellâh—a serf escaped from his village. The example most present to my memory is that in which an innocent person was hanged; and the Marquis of Lavalette interfered just in time to obtain a free pardon for the real culprit, who had been discovered. It was to check such irregular doings,

more frequent than can be readily believed in Europe, that the debated clause in the Tanzimat seems to have been introduced, although it is quite possible that political machinations may be behind. I am not aware whether it was proposed to interfere with *executions by the ñaboot;* the most common in Egypt, and the most unjust, because death may, or may not, ensue according to the strength of the sufferer! It ought in fairness to be added, that the present ruler, Abbas Pasha, insists on the maintenance of his right with better grace than could his predecessors; for he has not by any means shown himself of a sanguinary disposition.

CHAPTER VI.

Relations of the Sheikh-el-Beled with his People — Village Party—Adventures of the Sheikh of Zag-a-Zig—Early Marriages.

It would be a mistake, from what has been said, to conceive the Sheikh-el-Beled under the form of a slave-driver, ever wielding the cudgel or the lash. His relations with his parishioners are far more varied and agreeable. Except when demanding taxes in the name of the Government, or oppressing for the satisfaction of his own cupidity—and cupidity is natural to the race—the Sheikh plays the part of a respectable first citizen. Fellâhs retain no bitter remembrance of blows they have received; but, like cheerful children, have a smile on their faces as soon as the smart of corporal correction has died away. They see in the Sheikh the most respectable

type of their race, and admire themselves therein. An independent British farmer is stupidly hushed and awkwardly happy in the presence of the Squire, who swears the same oaths as he, and is unmerciful to the same syllables; but the fellâh, though perhaps inwardly flurried on some important ceremonious occasions, treats his Sheikh with respectful familiarity, and whilst certainly flattered by condescension, endeavours to deserve it by decent demeanour and reserved deportment. The principal men of the village—that is to say, the oldest and best behaved—constantly collect in the evening in the divan, or reception-room, or under the covered gallery of the court-yard; and whilst the pipe and coffee-cup circulate, gravely discuss topics interesting to all, and especially the Khaber, or news of the day. Political events of very distant countries are often canvassed in these little conclaves; but, of course, communities are sometimes changed into persons, and nearly every circumstance is so distorted as not to be recognisable. We shall introduce the reader to some scenes of this kind in future chapters; but at present have to relate the simple adventures of the Sheikh of Zag-a-Zig, which were told me as an illustration of the vicissitudes

of human life, derived from fact, not as a story constructed for mere amusement.

Sheikh Abd-el-Haï, which means Slave of the Living One, was, in the main, a just and good man. Though not particularly sparing of the rod, he did not use it much to his own advantage; and if he boasted the possession of some substance, it was derived rather from good fortune than from any acts of oppression. One of his best qualities was hospitality; and he possessed this virtue in so great a degree, that it was the cause of misfortune to him, although, in the end, his master, on casting up accounts, brought in a balance in his favour.

It was his custom to eat in the porch of his house, situated at the entrance of the village of Zag-a-Zig, and to be constantly on the look-out for some traveller whom he might invite to partake of his fare. Wealthy and poor, all found an equal reception with him; and his daughter Amnah used to count up the fleas in the house, and pretend that there was a specimen from every village and city in Egypt. One large fellow especially, whom she could never catch, and who pestered her waking and sleeping, she called Masree, and remembered his having been

brought from Cairo by a wandering Derwish. Though by no means a hard-hearted little girl, she objected strongly to indiscriminate hospitality, and regarded every hungry-looking stranger as an enemy.

One evening Amnah brought out a large dish of rice and mutton, and, having set it before Abd-el-Haï, said:

"Thank God! there is no stranger to devour the best part of what my hands have prepared."

But her father rebuked her, and sat in a melancholy mood for some time, leaving the dish untouched. There was a little affectation in this, because many a poor neighbour would have been glad to share his meal; but our virtues are sometimes handmaids to our failings, and the worthy Abd-el-Haï, being vain and ambitious, aspired to have his name spread about in the world as the hospitable Sheikh of Zag-a-Zig.

At length, as the grey film of darkness began to thicken over the country, three men armed with naboots appeared coming along the gisr through the cotton-fields. It was evident they were wayfarers; and the Sheikh, hastily

rising, ran to meet them, and invited them to share his humble meal, *bismillah!*—in the name of God! The men, though a little surprised at this exuberant hospitality, accepted willingly, and licked their lips at sight of the smoking dish of rice, as it appeared like a silver mountain in the light of a lamp which Amnah came and placed in a niche. Sitting down, they ate like buffaloes; whilst the Sheikh, forgetting his own hunger in his enthusiasm, admired their appetite and picked out a tit-bit for one and a delicate morsel for the other, urging them to eat their fill, for there was more rice in the basket and another sheep or two in the stable.

The strangers were, all three, men of ill-favoured aspect, thick-necked, with sallow faces and eyes askance, and whilst abounding in flattery, took occasion now and then to wink one at the other and thrust their tongues into their checks. When the meal was concluded, they drank coffee like Wahabees, smoked pipes as many as were offered, and even hinted, though unsuccessfully, that araki would be acceptable. Late at night the Sheikh conducted them to the principal chamber, where beds were prepared,

and retired wishing that happy slumbers might weigh down, and pleasant visions line, their honoured eyelids.

Next morning he found that the strangers had disappeared, and along with them one camel, two buffaloes, three asses, a cow, several sheep and goats, and a good deal of other property; so that poverty was with him in place of wealth. Thereupon, Sheikh Abd-el-Haï began to slap his face in the most methodical manner, as if intending to break his jaws; and his daughter also began to slap herself, and to cry out that nothing was left to them but fleas, and that three new ones were in the house. The neighbours, hearing the outcry, came to learn the news, and declared that slapping was the only remedy for the case, as the men had probably by that time crossed the river. They expressed themselves grieved for the occurrence; and then each went his way. The Sheikh continued beating the sides of his face for some time, and when tired of that employment, took to plucking out his beard. Amnah, however, suggested that it was time to desist, and that her father ought himself to pursue the robbers and regain his property if possible. The

idea was not a bad one, and, having kissed his daughter's temples, the Sheikh set out immediately.

He travelled on foot, and went, says the narrative, through a great variety of districts without success, until he reached a distant village in the Bahairah and found himself reduced to great misery. He spent his last piece of money in buying some bread and onions, and, spreading out his abayah, a striped woollen gown, sat down upon it and looked round, with inveterate hospitality, for some one to share his meal. A man happening to pass, was attracted by the usual *Bismillah!* and ate voraciously. When he had satisfied himself he said:

"O generous man, complete thy kindness, and give me a draught of water, for I am too weary to reach the river!"

So Abd-el-Haï went down to fetch water; but when he returned his guest had disappeared, and with him the woollen gown. He ran to some people who were working near, and asked them if they had seen a man with an abayah. They said: "Yes, there is So-and-so and Such-an-one;" and laughed at him.

"Verily," muttered the Sheikh, as he went

away from this place with tears in his eyes, "it is written that my good actions shall bring nothing but misfortune upon me. However, there is no fear that I shall starve; for if I find but one dinner for every ten I have bestowed on others I shall be able to travel back to Zag-a-Zig without spending a copper."

So he proceeded on his journey until he reached another village, towards the hour of sunset. The people had come home from the fields, and were seen sitting before their doors, whilst others were strolling by a row of acacias, breathing the freshness of evening, and waiting for the call to prayers. Sheikh Abd-el-Haï walked very slowly along, to give some one an opportunity to invite him; but no one said *tafuddal* or *bismillah*. Had he been of more respectable appearance, he would have gone at once to the house of the Sheikh and claimed hospitality; but he was ashamed to do this in his ragged and dirty state; and sneaked along the streets, looking more like a thief than an honest man. A pack of hungry dogs suddenly attacked him; and one, catching him by his trousers, carried away a large piece thereof. Probably they would have devoured him, for he

was too dispirited to defend himself, had not a young girl, bearing on her head a large square tray covered with loaves of bread, appeared and called them off. This done, she went tripping away; but Abd-el-Haï, deriving hope from the sound of her voice, which was sweet as that of a lamb learning to bleat, followed her as fast as he was able, and laying his hand upon her garment, cried,—

"O maiden!"

But she, mistaking his action, replied,—

"Lewd fellow! is it not enough that I have saved thee from the dogs? Wouldst thou now molest me?"

So he withdrew his hand, and was silent for shame; whilst the maiden, hastening away, entered a house, and presently came out again without the bread, and turned down a by-lane, looked fearfully about, lest the impudent and ungrateful stranger should follow her.

Then the Sheikh began to reflect, that if he remained wandering about in this wise, he should meet again with the dogs; and he said, "It is better to eat than to be eaten." So, observing that the bread-maiden had left the door of her house a-jar, he slipped in, and finding

all dark, began to stretch out his hands as he walked, lifting up his toes very high, and holding in his breath. Suddenly, however, some people entered behind him, and he had only just time to say, "By your leave, O blessed ones!" and creep into the oven, or rather stove, which usually occupies the further end of the principal chamber in a fellâh house, and serves for a bedstead as well as a warming-pan. Having quite hid himself, he listened attentively, and heard a man and woman speaking tenderly one to the other. To his surprise, he recognised in the voice of the man that of one of the rogues who had stolen his cattle. At first he thought he had got into a robber's den, but soon discovered that he was in the house of Sheikh Noor-ed-Deen, who was engaged in entertaining his friends in the reception-room, whilst his wife received her lover. After some conversation, the woman said,—

"The supper is ready cooked, and Fatmeh has brought the bread. Sit thou on the furn (oven), and I will give thee the dishes, naming them as I give; for I dare not light a lamp, lest the neighbours might peep in through a chink and see thee."

"Good," said the man, gruffly; "but make haste, for I am hungry."

"Here is a dish of shorba, my love," quoth the woman, in a mincing tone; "and I put a spoon into thy hands and a loaf of bread by thy side."

"Woman," was the reply, "I have a spoon; but I can find no bread, and feel no soup."

The woman laughed, thinking he was joking; but the Sheikh had slily put out his hand and taken in the dish and the bread: but he was afraid to eat, lest he might be heard. According to the narrative, which here becomes too complete to be true, the whole supper was brought, dish by dish, and disposed of in the same way, until the guilty couple began to suspect that the devil was concerned in the affair, and to be very much afraid. At this juncture there was a knocking at the door, and the voice of Noor-ed-Deen demanded admittance.

"Ready, O Lord!" said the woman, who feared her husband more than the devil. "My love, hide in the furn," she added, in a low voice.

The man, accordingly, without even saying "*Destour*," tried to get in; but our worthy

Sheikh, with forked fingers, poked his eyes, and nearly blinded him.

"The devil's in the furn!" growled he, starting back. "*Destour, destour, yu mobarakeen!*"

"Get in, fool; my husband's at the door," muttered she, thrusting him from behind; but every time he advanced with chattering teeth, the Skeikh, unmindful of his apologetical *destour*, tapped him on the nose or squeezed his throat, and sent him squeaking away. At length, however, the woman mustered up all her strength, and fairly bundled her lover into the oven on the top of the Sheikh, who began pummelling his enemy to his heart's content, quite certain that he would dare neither to resist nor complain.

The husband was now admitted. Probably he had entertained suspicions before; they were pretty nearly changed into certainty by the delay that had taken place. However, he made no observation thereon, but sitting down on the furn, asked for supper.

"Hath not my lord supped?" said the wife, in a coaxing tone.

"No; do as I bid thee," was the brief reply.

Then the woman related that the devil had appeared and carried away every dish, at which

Noor-ed-Deen expressed incredulity. Whilst he was speaking, the shorba appeared by his side; and, says the narrative, every dish in succession: until at last the Sheikh himself came forth, and took his place on the other side of the furn, opposite the master of the house. The latter, who at once saw that he had an honest face, invited him to sup; which he did. Afterwards, having begged permission, Abd-el-Haï related his whole story in presence of the faithless wife, and having concluded, dragged forth the culprit, exclaiming, "This is the man that stole my cattle, and this is the man that hath taken thy wife!"

The behaviour of the husband under these circumstances was what I have often heard recommended by Arabs, although they rarely have the discretion to practise it.

"Woman," said Noor-ed-Deen, addressing his wife, "it appeareth that thy mind and thy eyes have wandered from me; and such being the will of God, I submit without exercising my right of punishment. Perchance, because I am a grave man, not much loving boisterous merriment and the tinkling of musical instruments, thy heart hath yearned in preference for this

youth; but if thou wert weary of preparing my food and bearing children for me, in return for my tenderness and care, why not tell me thy thoughts freely? I would have cheerfully released thee from thy duty. As it is, even, depart in peace. I inflict upon thee the triple sentence of divorce. And now, Ahmed," he added, addressing the robber and seducer, "I learn that the cattle which thou and thy brothers brought back from the fair, were not bought but stolen. Return all to the owner, with whatever he may exact in compensation for the trouble thou hast given him. If, further, thou wilt take this woman as thy wife, when her time is completed, it will be well."

Matters were thus arranged. Abd-el-Haï remained as a guest with Noor-ed-Deen for some time; and before departing for Zag-a-Zig, proposed to bestow upon him his daughter Amnah in marriage. Noor-ed-Deen, in return, offered his niece, Fatmeh the bread-girl; and the story ends, in true Eastern style, by the marriage of those two respectable middle-aged men with a couple of children, who, in Europe, would scarcely have laid aside their dolls.

It is to be observed, that the extravagantly

early marriages which take place in Egypt are to be explained, not so much by physical as by moral causes. That nubility has little or nothing to do with the matter is evident from the fact, that many unions are antecedent to that critical period. At any rate, the majority of betrothments are. I believe it will be found, that in all profligate countries early marriages are common. The Arnolphes of Egypt do not consider that extreme ignorance is a sufficient guarantee of virtue; they require also extreme youth as a *sine quâ non;* and if laughter were a sin, they would believe only in the first forty days of existence. All this may account for the heavy charges of immorality, under which the Egyptian women labour. Being totally destitute of the idea of duty, as we understand it, the honour of their husbands is placed under the safe-guard only of love or prudence; and that naïve answer, "There is no opportunity," may be taken as made in the name of the great majority of wives.

Early marriages have other causes besides the fore-casting jealousy of bridegrooms. Among them is the desire of parents to guide the destinies of their children, for interested or other motives. A time comes when the Muslimee girl

has a right of option; and then, farewell to the dowry and other perquisites. The Capulets and Ashtons of fiction are represented as sacrificing their children to caprice or mistaken tenderness; but I am afraid we have no right to be too severe on our Eastern brethren, because they part with their daughters for a price—so many riyals, a cow, or even the prospect of a few good feeds on rice and mutton.

CHAPTER VII.

Start for Sa-el-Haggar—The Mooring-Ground—System of Gisrs—The Village—Vast Walls—Influence of ancient Monuments on the Fellâhs—Their legendary Lore—Tradition of Shebin—Gradual Diminution of the Human Species—Plucking Corn by the Wayside—A Model Village—A Collection of Hovels—Present Aspect of Neghileh—Sunsets on the Nile—Wardân—Progress to the Barrage and to Cairo—Magnificent Prospect.

We were awakened early in the morning at Mohallet Abu Ali by the uneasy rocking of our boat, and the slushing sound of waves. A steamer had passed on its way to Atfeh, and the long scarf of smoke it left behind upon the waters was scarcely yet tattered by the cold breeze that preceded the rising of the sun.

In this part of the Nile the passage of steamers has become quite a common occurrence. The fellâhs almost cease to wonder at the fire-ships, as they call them, although they

still very generally consider them as the works of supernatural beings. How different is the construction of the European and the Oriental mind! A friend has just told me, that if he could be convinced of the possibility of angelic or demoniacal agents interfering in human affairs he should cease to exist from mere fright. The fellâhs believe themselves to be ever brought in contact, in their most trivial actions, with beings belonging to another world, and yet live on as tranquilly as any materialist. Talking of these steamers, a curious piece of information, no doubt founded on something like a fact, was given us of No. 3;—they say it was won by Mohammed Ali at cards from an English priest!

Ahmed came on board early, well satisfied with the impression produced by his silk waistcoat and fine shawl, and we were soon in motion for Sa-el-Haggar, or Sa of the Stones; a place by which I had often passed without pausing. Long before noon its vast mountainous walls, which form quite a feature in this level landscape, and are scarcely overtopped by the palm-trees, were in sight; but the breeze took us lazily round the great bend that leads to the landing-place, which some splendid sycamores, clustering

into a perfect grove, overhang. Two or three grave, respectable Arabs, no doubt notables of the village of Sa, were smoking and chatting in the shade with the reis of a large grain-boat just arrived.

The plains of Egypt, where there are no eminences except the tombs of ancient cities, sometimes built over with modern villages, are covered with a network of winding embankments called Gisrs. They vary in height, of course, but at the utmost rarely exceed twenty feet, by ten or twelve in breadth. During the period of the inundation communication between various points can only be kept up by means of vast circuits along these embankments; but as the water gradually recedes, or, rather, is swallowed up by the earth, shorter and shorter cuts are taken, and every month establishes a fresh right of way across the fields, until at length it is possible to proceed in a straight line. As will be supposed, the preservation of the gisrs, pierced here and there with sluice-gates, is a very important point; and almost every year the villagers are called out to repair them. A corresponding system of canals, for the most part dry in summer, and liable to be

filled with the mud deposit, requires equal attention. As usual in Egypt, all this work is done by means of forced labour, under the eye of overseers armed with sticks and koorbashes. The same formality, by the way, is observed with every class of labourer in Egypt; and even the masons of Alexandria, who might be supposed to have a smack of freedom, wield the trowel and the plummet under the invigorating influence of the lash!

We had to go back some distance along the gisr, between dhourra and cotton-fields, before striking off to the village; and even so I had to be carried pick-a-back across a place from which the water had not yet been drained. The village of Sa is large and straggling, and divided into two parts, each inhabited, says tradition, by the descendants of a particular family. Further on, within extensive circular enclosures of dhourra-straw, heaps of the fresh-gathered ear were piled to dry in the sun. A swarm of children ceased from their play to stare at us; and divers gossips, squatted at the doors of their huts, drew the corners of their mantles over their faces. The men were abroad in the fields; whilst the women, according to the prejudice of our guide, Moham-

med, were conspiring, as they always do, against their peace.

Having got entangled in some water-meadows, across which a path seemed to promise a short cut to the mighty walls of Sais, we at length, by the guidance of a civil lad, who left off shouting to his cattle to come to our aid, found the right road, and reached our destination. My object is not to describe what has so often been described before, and I shall rarely, if ever, enter into detail on monuments which I have admired with others, but which in dimension, aspect, and purport, have been over and over again fully dealt with. We wandered some time through these vast earth-works, and endeavoured in vain to trace the form of the central building:—a confused ruin, gradually wearing down into an inform pile of dirt, and broken tiles, and chips of porphyry, nearly ground to dust; and along the sides of which goats scramble, mistaking it for a mountain, and flirt pebbles into the faces of great meek-looking cows: for vegetation has stolen in through the broad ragged breaches of the enclosure, and changed it into a rich pasture-ground. Two or three boy-cowherds, whom we surprised in the fragment of a chamber, were

talking earnestly of some fabulous sultan, whose palace this place once was; but broke off at the sound of our footsteps, and looked inquisitively at us without speaking.

The influence exerted by the presence of these stupendous monuments of the olden time on the minds of the fellâhs is naturally great. Without books or correct traditions, they sit amidst fragments of ancient temples and palaces, and create—believing as they create—wonderful histories of wonderful races, with which they people the early time of their country. Some obscure and distorted reminiscences, no doubt, mingle with and determine the form of these reveries; but the kings and the dynasties, the events and the civilisation of which they speak, are derived principally from their fancy, kindled and excited by what they behold, and guided by certain vague notions gathered from the Korân and from the random preachings in the mosques.

There is a village called Shebin in the Delta. The name somewhat resembles the words which Father Noah is said to have uttered when he first saw land from the poop of the Ark: "*Shai bayen,*" "something is appearing." Here, at once,

is sufficient groundwork for a tradition; and Shebin is set down as the place where the Ark first rested after the Deluge. More positive accounts, it is true, point to some lofty mountain as the real spot; but the Deluge, in the fellâh's view, was nothing but a very destructive inundation, and he listens to all objections with obstinate incredulity.

The vast size of the monuments of Egypt assists in confirming another notion about old times, namely, "that there were giants in the land in those days." It would appear that in the beginning men were one hundred cubits high and ten broad, and lived hundreds of years. Their stature and the length of their lives have diminished gradually to the present standard; and the fellâh, who reasons with a vengeance when once set a-going, believes that the process of diminution still continues, and that the time will come when ten of our descendants will be able to go into an ordinary shoe of these days. "Then," say they, "this little race will find one of our shoes, and will make the circuit thereof, and climb over it, and huddle inside it, and will observe, wondering, one to the other: This is a shoe of the people of old times!" Not

being learned in the divisibility of matter, these historians of the future think they have thus provided for the extinction of the human race in a decent manner. It is worth remarking, that they have a jealous notion that we Nasara possess far more detailed information on these important subjects than they; and cunningly suggest that our priests could tell a wonderful thing or two if they chose. The Muslim freely acknowledges the superiority of Christians in all departments of knowledge, from mechanics to the art magical; and seems to feel some compunction at damning so learned a race.

In returning to the boat, Mohammed stole a plentiful supply of half-ripe dhourra, which he hid in the ample bosom of his dirty blue gown, maintaining against my remonstrances that it was perfectly lawful to levy such contributions. The fact of concealment, however, testified against him. In the East, the Scriptural license of plucking ears of corn by the wayside is still admitted; but it is dishonest to carry anything away.

We moored that night at Kafr Zeiat. The tinkling of castanets and the throbbing of a darabukah announced that jollity was going on in a solitary coffee-house, at some distance in the

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fields. We did not, however, go and join in the fun.

This place is of some note, as the port where boats stop laden with passengers or merchandise for Tanta. It was once proposed that the railway should abut on the shore opposite, that a steam-bridge should be established, and the line should continue circuitously, by way of Tanta and the central districts of the Delta, to the neighbourhood of the Barrage. Possibly this would have been the best plan, as it seems now pretty well established that the lines depending simply or chiefly on too-widely separated termini scarcely ever pay.

Next day we proceeded as far as Neghileh, one of the few successful model villages established by the Government. In 1846 I stopped there on my way to Cairo, and was struck by the miserable appearance of the place. Mud huts are never very agreeable objects to the eye, but here they were positively disgusting. They seemed as if they had all been shaken into one vast heap of rubbish by the gentle earthquakes of the country. A more than usually wretched population buzzed round the low apertures called doors, like shabby bees about an insolvent bee-

hive. A drove of buffaloes, some of them worn to the last stage of disease, with their tails buried, as it were, in a groove between two angular haunches, came down to the water to drink, followed by several ghastly girls, whose occupation was to catch the manure ere it touched the ground. The cattle-plague had fallen with unusual severity on this spot.

One of the few creditable ideas adopted by the great Pasha was the institution of model villages, intended to introduce a system of architecture into the country at once more commodious and more healthy than the old. Had it formed part of a system of gradual improvement — the only one applicable — Mohammed Alî would have acquired fairer claims to the gratitude of posterity than any Thothmes or Rameses of them all. But it was a mere isolated movement of temporary and unintelligent benevolence, like that of the lady who wanted to furnish every cotter's hut with a piano; and was, in general, deplorably misunderstood in its application. Several villages were built, of course by means of forced labour, and peopled with fellâhs ejected from their mud caverns. So far, so good. A little compulsion, in a country where compulsion

is the rule, was not, perhaps, misapplied in this case. But mark the consequence! No sooner were the new tenants installed than the tax-gathers came down upon them, saying, "You are respectable people; you dwell in fine houses: *ergo*, you can afford to pay double what you did of yore." In vain the fellâhs expostulated; to pay they were obliged; and they found it necessary to prove their misery by returning to their old hovels, or reducing the new ones to an equal state of dilapidation.

The model village of Neghileh, subsequently established, seems to have been treated in a more equitable manner. We found the wretched mass of huts, formerly piled together without plan, and in the smallest possible space, replaced by houses comparatively large—say ten feet high—and very neat, laid out in streets crossing one another at right angles. A bazar occupied the river frontage. It consisted of a single line of shops, opening upon a pretty portico of trellis-work and vines, as high as the houses themselves. In front of this was a large shadowless garden, planted only with vegetables, and beyond the dusty quay or bank shelving down to the mooring-ground. The streets, on which no

windows opened, but only doors and air-holes high-placed, were cleanly swept, but somewhat sad and lonely to look at. A few women and goats were wandering along the flat roofs; and a dog, feeling perfectly secure, barked courageously at us from the same vantage ground as we strolled by. The houses are still of mud or clay — other materials would be difficult to procure — but are neatly plastered; and, no doubt, very comfortable. A large shoonah, or warehouse for grain, stands on the north of the village.

A considerable portion of this day was spent in laboriously tracking against the current; but in the afternoon a light breeze enabled us to spread the whole vast surface of our canvass. A fleet of empty grain-boats, returning from Alexandria, was soon left behind by our unrivalled dahabiah. The sunset was most delicious. A village on a mound, with the domed tomb of some sheikh, showed its black and varied outline against a singularly bright sheet of purple light that broke in foaming waves at the feet of a vast range of cloud-mountains, with slopes of topaz, and amethyst, and saffron, and crests of vermilion and gold. As we glided, gently bending beneath the breeze,

close under the bank, I saw a peasant turning his face towards this glorious prospect; but though he may have been thinking of the magic land which thus at times rises like a phantom above the horizon, it is more probable that he was watching his wife, who soon appeared with a bundle of agricultural implements over her shoulders. Not long afterwards the sail flapped lazily, and we were compelled to moor against a bank far from any village.

This would be a book of sunsets, if I did not resist the temptation to describe every remarkable phenomenon of the kind we witnessed. Next evening, when we moored nearly opposite Wardân, we beheld a scene of entrancing beauty. Our masts almost leaned against a grove of locust-trees, in which a cloud of pigeons came to settle, loading them as if with huge white flowers. On the opposite bank a long dense wood of sycamores and acacias—not swelling and receding like the undulating forests of Europe—but flat as stage scenery, just allowed the red orb to be seen in fragments, like a distant conflagration. A mass of strangely-contorted clouds, with broken rainbows here and there, tapestried nearly the

whole circuit of the heavens. The lake-like reach of the river was steeped in the most gorgeous colours. It glowed full of light from brim to brim, and burning eddies and rosy ripples came trembling up to our very boat-side. The world below, borrowing all the beauty of the heavens, seemed to borrow also their transparency, and shone and glittered as if about to dissolve like a soap-bubble. But the mirror stream grew grey as the sky dimmed, and presently flowed opaque and sullen beneath a heavy vault of darkness. The stars then came dropping one by one through the haze; and the moon rose red and vast behind the locust-tree grove.

Next day the wind but slightly served us, and we crept slowly on—the Pyramids in sight now and then—by tufted islands and palm-fringed shores, sometimes entangled in narrow channels between wall-like banks, sometimes slipping across broad sparkling reaches, sometimes in a state of mimic wreck on a shallow. Luckily we did not belong to the impatient school, and accepted every delay with Muslim resignation. A great number of boats, some lashed side by side, and piled high as a moun-

tain with bales of cotton, or whole barns-full of chopped straw, were dropping stern foremost down the stream; others, long and slender, laden with passengers, pilgrims and merchants, and soldiers and fellâhs, women and children, all heaped together behind the boards plastered with mud and dung, that alone kept the water out of the boat, were impelled by a couple of lazy oars. An occasional fragment of a song from one of these, or from peasants at work on the bank, came sounding with metallic clearness over the polished surface of the river, which the impertinent paddles of one or two steamers alone disturbed. For a great part of the day we were compelled to proceed by tracking; and a whole hour was spent in poling a distance of a hundred yards. Several hamlets were passed, and our jolly crew, as they tugged away at the rope, scraped a rare number of women, children, and geese off their feet on the dusty bank, and were rewarded by good-humoured curses. All these things amused our eyes; and when we had nothing to say the pipe gave occupation to our lips.

In the evening we arrived just below the spot where the Barrage throws its long row of

narrow arched gateways across the river, and moored against the sloping stone-faced bank. An immense number of boats were waiting for a good breeze to enable them to breast the furious current created by these half-finished works. In the morning we passed the channel most successfully; our boat making way whilst others lagged and almost lost ground, and swept on for the Queen of Eastern cities under a full press of canvass.

I have never approached Cairo without feeling the excitement of admiration—from the time when I first drank its health in brandy-and-water out of a teapot with poor Mr. Waghorn, on a scalding August day, to my last visit in a more serious mood. Soon after passing the spot where the Nile sadly parts its waters to wander in interminable windings, through flat level plains towards the sea, the scene, before so narrow and confined, expands into proportions of ever-increasing grandeur. The river, no longer huddling between walls of dust or mud, rolls broad and placid, in the centre of a vast landscape, and instead of forming the whole prospect, forms but the mirror of a prospect. Groves, opening here and there into vistas miles deep,

conduct the eye not merely to the base of an ultramarine dome, but to the vast undulating desert, sparkling with sunlight, jagged with rocks, and strewed with pyramids. The city, now clasped round with woods and gardens, shows only its tapering minarets, like the spears of a giant army glittering over a forest; but the outline of the citadel can be traced against the huge precipices of Mokattam, and, crowning the whole landscape, the stupendous new mosque glitters far up in the light-impregnated air.

A more detailed description of this glorious scene would scarcely convey an idea of the effect it produces on the traveller, because the material beauties displayed, the rich diversity of form and colour, are seen through a medium inconceivably bright, by eyes made moist with enthusiasm. All men find pleasing associations here. Even antiquarians are seized with a poetic fervour that accompanies them ever afterwards, and teaches them the value of imagination when brought to bear on archæological research; professed hero-worshippers, whether of Greek, or Roman, or French predilections, commune with the mighty shades of their favourite idols, and taste the incomprehensible pleasure of venerating the least vene-

rable form of humanity; whilst Christians, if they can resist the temptation to misapply their logic, may see the very road by which a heaven-favoured people departed, and a divine Child of the same stock came flying for his life to the land of Egypt.

Most travellers, on arriving at this point, regard themselves as merely on the threshold of their journey; and, in fact, here only do they begin to break through their European crust, and obtain glimpses of Eastern life. Steamers and hotels have hitherto monopolised them, although the more industrious and observant have, of course, made valuable notes on manners, and become thoroughly initiated in the character of the Arabs by their experience of waiters, dragomans, and donkey-boys. Arrived in Cairo, from the balcony of Shepherd's Hotel they enlarge their knowledge of Oriental life; and the author of a charming prose poem, of which American literature may be proud, sees pork-hating Sakkas with curved backs carrying water about in *hog-skins!*

A French traveller makes a still more remarkable observation. In order to express the curious juxtapositions which sometimes do amuse the eye

in Cairo, he tells us that on the Esbekiyeh he saw Europeans walking arm-in-arm with bayadères! The allegory is an unfortunate one; as, in the first place, there are no bayadères in Egypt, and secondly, the native women do not walk arm-in-arm even with their husbands. It is extremely rare for a man, above the condition of a fellâh, even to keep side-by-side with a woman in the street; and though an impudent wench may sometimes parley with a stranger in public, the circumstance is so much against custom that some passenger is sure to elect himself an extempore spy over their actions, and be ready to dog them wherever they go. I do not like general national reflections; but it may be boldly said, that the French are peculiarly disqualified by nature or education for travellers. They often see what does not exist, and rarely, if ever, put the right interpretation on what does exist. The whole effort of their mind seems to be spent in ranging whatever facts present themselves into the categories, what does and what does not resemble French manners; the former being admirable, and the latter detestable. A gentleman, who was my companion to Egypt on my last voyage, naïvely observed, as an excuse for

not knowing any other language than his own, and his determination not to know any other—I must translate literally—"The Frenchmen have the pretension to impose our language on others, and not to suffer others to impose theirs upon us!"

CHAPTER VIII.

Tebbâneh—Description of Cairo—Eastern Architecture—Private Streets—Scenes in the By-lanes—Ventilation—Quarters—Public Porters—The Canal and its Banks—Crumbling Condition of the City—Fountains—Strolls in the Streets—Equivocal Adventures—Environs of the City—their Beauty—Gardens—Road to Heliopolis—Fertile Country.

On arriving opposite Cairo this time, we moored first at a place called Tebbâneh, between Boulac and Rhoda Island, just by the palace of Nazlet Hanem. It is at a pleasant riding distance from the city, which we, of course, visited every day, although already tolerably familiar with it.

Many portions of Cairo are beginning to wear what may be called a European appearance, although this expression scarcely describes the real state of the case. Eastern architecture has found a new form to represent a seeming progress in civilisation. Of old, it was pic-

turesque at any rate, perhaps from its very want of regularity! It is now sinking to the level of that which presides over the construction of a row of London brick-houses. The eaves still sometimes project, but there are no longer any kiosques hanging on the corners of the roofs, or bay-windows lading the side walls, or bold projections of whole stories. A series of flat immoveable blinds, made of laths crossed lozenge-wise in a glaring white wall—such is the aspect even of a Turkish palace on improved principles. In Alexandria, a whole quarter is built in this style, though the houses are, luckily, not in rows, but thrown here and there behind walls of various height, with gateways of all dimensions, and trees sometimes to hide their sharp angles.

The same system has been partially followed at Cairo, but in a far less degree. There are whole rows of houses, of regular Frank character, in and about the Mooski. Once, however, having got clear of these, it is possible to wander for hours along streets in which there is nothing to remind the eye of unpicturesque Europe. The Sookhs, or business streets, which are really not more properly bazars than Piccadilly or Ludgate Hill, have been often described, and I will not attempt

to reproduce their picture, although I doubt whether the untravelled reader has even yet a very correct idea of these narrow streets of shops, without doorways, without glazing, without counters; mere square niches let into the wall, about two feet from the ground; the whole sometimes shaded by a low solid-ribbed roof, but more generally by boards passing from terrace to terrace of the lofty houses; often by mere scattered awnings; and frequently quite open to sun and air.

The quarters in which there are no shops are, perhaps, still more striking in appearance. Sometimes there is a long and silent street bordered by basements of massive stone, painted in alternate white and red horizontal stripes. Upon these basements, which contain stables and offices, the inhabited part of the house is built, of brick, on a flooring of rafters, which projects several feet over the street. Heavy bay-windows are scattered along the front of the overhanging upper stories, and contribute to produce the impression that the houses are leaning forward, and about to fall together. A wag boasts that he has stretched out his hand across the street, and put cockroaches into the

drink of a poor old Armenian neighbour, in order to illustrate, he says, that merciless line of Chaucer—

"The blind eateth many a fly."

As the streets at bottom are seldom more than ten feet across, often much narrower, it will easily be imagined that nothing but a narrow zig-zagging streak of sky is visible aloft, and that the sun can rarely shoot down a single beam to the hard mud pavement. Here and there you pass from a kind of twilight into long archways, or narrow, crooked, noisome passages, totally wrapped in darkness, where you are liable to meet with a camel laden with fagots to tear, or with dripping leather sacks of water to soil, your garments.

There are no windows, properly speaking, on the ground-floors; only a few air-holes, high placed, and carefully barred. The doors, sometimes in elegantly groined archways, with a wooden lamp and an aloe-plant swinging above, or a dried crocodile fastened with iron cramps, are seldom seen open, and, even in that case, show only a gloomy antechamber, or the commencement of a passage turning off at right

angles. Now and then a saucy eunuch lounges on a bench, or a discreet-looking Sakka gravely carries in his skins. Everything produces the impression of a series of castellated dwellings, of which the owners are in perpetual fear of insurrection; but, of course, the real reason of this appearance is the mania for complete privacy.

Almost all the open spaces in Cairo, and there are many, occur in the rears of the houses; both gardens and court-yards are as much as possible concealed. In other great cities, light and air come from the street; in Cairo, not. There the streets are merely regarded as thoroughfares, or, rather, as trenches, to keep off that dangerous enemy a neighbour. Thus, in riding along, a mere stranger pities the Caireens for their folly in depriving themselves of proper means of ventilation, not knowing that, with the exception of some few dense quarters, there is scarcely a more thinly-scattered city in the world. Even in the Jewish quarter, where the lanes are so narrow that a woman in an advanced state of pregnancy can scarcely be passed without danger,—they know it, and naïvely cry, "*Hebleh, ya khawayah!*"—there are spacious courts within the houses, and even handsome gardens.

Two or three long streets traverse the city from north to south, and several, crossing them at nearly right angles, lead from the citadel towards the river. The old division into quarters, each under the protection of a guardian demon in the shape of a serpent, is still kept up; but in many cases the massive wooden gates are never closed, or have lapsed from their hinges. A porter sleeps near the gates, on a wooden crate and a mat, to open for passengers; but it is not always easy to wake him from without. Marvellously deep and sound is the slumber of the Egyptians, who, having said their prayers, dream never, they believe, of devils. In retired places it is sometimes not discreet to push too far into the labyrinth of gloomy blind alleys formed by these quarters, especially for a stranger who does not understand the language. I was once, in my prowlings about in search of the picturesque, with a friend newly-arrived, shut in by the wag of a porter, who walked off with the key. Energetic expostulation procured us an exit, at last, without any disagreeable consequence except the delay; but we were very nearly mobbed by a crowd of women returning from the market, whom we found collected outside.

A canal, dry or filled with stinking pools during a great part of the year, traverses the city from north to south, but is rarely seen, being shut in by the houses and crossed by bridges, roofed, and forming bazaars. From the terraces of the bordering habitations it may be traced running along like a gloomy moat, for the most part overhung by ruins and heaps of rubbish. Huts built amidst the remains of great houses, fragments of large rooms made habitable by crazy walls of mud or palisades of palm-branches, contain a wretched population, that prowl about, looking more like ghosts than human beings. Dogs, hungry and fierce as jackals, sneak to and fro in search of offal below; hawks and kites soar above. It has been proposed by some to convert this abominable nuisance, which breeds pestilence every year, into a canal perpetually filled with water; by others, into a new street: but I do not think that anything has as yet been determined.

It is most difficult to convey a general idea of a city, the very character of which is infinite variety. Suffice to say that, with the exception of a very few portions, the whole of Cairo seems in a crumbling, tumble-down state. The mosques,

which, with every variety of minaret and dome, shoot up on all sides, are all, save that on the citadel, terribly out of repair, and seem mere desecrated ruins. If a fresh whitewashed building is seen, it is sure to be a guardhouse, where the slipshod Karakol, in dirty white uniform, keeps guard over the public peace. Here and there fountains with brass nipples, which thirsty passers-by may suck, and sometimes with tall, handsome, iron-grated fronts, like vast windows, with a school attached, attest the piety of some wealthy native.

Many streets, at certain hours of the day, are perfectly thronged with passengers, but in others scarcely one or two are to be seen in a long summer's day. In the southern quarters, inhabited by the wealthier classes, about the Birket el Fil, grave, respectable-looking men, are met, riding or walking slowly along; whilst towards the north is the region of dingy turbans, threadbare tarbooshes, blue shirts, ragged shawls, and naked feet. In the central portions the two classes, mixed with merchants, soldiers, Copts, Jews, asses, camels, and strangers, unite to form a huge, buzzing, brilliant, moving crowd.

During several months' residence in Cairo,

I rarely passed a day without riding or strolling about in various directions, for the mere pleasure of admiring the peculiar aspect of the streets. If I had been a painter, my portfolio would soon have been filled with sketches. Others have followed my example in search of adventures; but adventures of every kind are rare in Cairo, and as to the intrigues which some imagine themselves to have been engaged in, they are, so far as I know, mere ludicrous deceptions. There are a few "ladies of quality," who are always falling in love with Franks supposed to be gullable or rich; and So-and-So, who allowed himself to be dressed as a woman, and nearly injured his spine by an exaggerated imitation of the wriggling walk of a true Masriyeh, may be assured that the adventure was known beforehand in his hotel, and all over Cairo the next day. The heroine was merely the commonplace foil of the too-celebrated Stamboolina. Egyptian women certainly are, according to all accounts, licentious and prone to intrigue, and many of them have had affairs with Franks even during the month of Ramadhan. But if a person's taste lead him to these equivocal adventures, he must qualify himself by a

very long residence in the country, and not merely don the national costume, but learn how to wear it—no easy matter; and, moreover, acquire a considerable knowledge of Arabic. As there is nothing, however, very interesting to observe in the manners of this class of women, with whom it is only possible to have stolen interviews of short duration, there is no compensating advantage for the risk. Curiosity once satisfied, and the mysterious harim once penetrated, no temptation remains; and a very satisfactory idea of the state of female society in Egypt can be obtained from conversations with Christian women, who know all about it, and are in constant intercourse with the harims.

I do not think that justice has ever been done to the beauties of the neighbourhood of Cairo. I know no city, the environs of which, setting the antiquities entirely aside, are more picturesque. The mountains that overlook it are vast and precipitous, with ruined forts and convents rising here and there. On nearly every side stretch beautiful gardens, intersected by quiet shady lanes, across which dance innumerable little rivulets of water. Every tree which the climate will suffer is planted in these gar-

dens—palms, sycamores, mimosas of all kinds, orange and lemon-trees, lebeks, bananas, pomegranates, olives, and fifty others, forming groups of infinite variety. No winter comes to strip the branches of their foliage, and even in the midst of summer there are cool shady arcades to be found in nearly every direction.

Fifty different excursions may be made to great distances, almost all presenting peculiar features. A pleasant ride is that to Heliopolis. The plain, though undiversified by a single mound or a single swell, presents objects sufficient enough to keep alive the attention. A whole sketch-book might be filled by the way with charming studies of nature. At one place there is a huge water-wheel, turned, perhaps, by two large black buffaloes,—a half-naked brat squatting close by to keep up the excitement with a long jereed. A vast sycamore, with gnarled trunk and wide-spreading branches, throws its shadow over the group. The melancholy creaking of the wheel is not unpleasant when mellowed by distance. A swift streak of water shoots round the trunk of the tree, and glances like a silver snake across the fields. Further on a few fellâh huts cluster in a palm-grove. Here is the white

dome of a Sheikh's tomb; there, the minaret of a mosque, glittering in the glorious sunshine. Sometimes we pass through lanes lined with acacias, which tremulously shake their thin leaves in a sort of local breeze, that hangs murmuring amidst their branches, and can be felt nowhere else. Then we traverse broad expanses of clover, of true emerald green, freckled with flights of white birds. At intervals the fields are bounded by single or double rows of trees, of graceful outline. Occasionally the mournful cypress rises through the air like a green obelisk; and vast orchards of mulberries stretch on either side of the winding lanes. Luxuriant crops succeed, of wheat, and barley, and lupins, and beans, and lentils, and chick-peas, and *bamiah*, and *melochiyeh*,—glutinous vegetables, that form a great part of the food of the people—with immense fields of sugar-cane. Nothing can exceed the fertility of the land in this region. Nature is as prodigal of her bounties as the heart of man can wish; and if we meet wretchedly-clad and sickly-looking human beings moving through these rich scenes, like grim and dirty insects over a robe of silk, it is be-

cause bad government can neutralise upon this earth all the blessings of Providence.

When I lived in Cairo, I rarely passed a week without pushing, in some direction or other, to several miles beyond the walls, ever more interested and delighted with the multiple forms that present themselves to the eye —down the long avenue of Shoubra to the delicious gardens that surround the palace— to the busy streets of Boulac or Masr el Atikeh— to the Petrified Forest, the Valley of the Wanderings, the quarries of Toura and Massara; but to describe all these scenes would far exceed my limits, and most of them must be well known to the readers of travels.

CHAPTER IX.

Cairo by Day, and Cairo by Night — Lanterns — Sentinels — Watchmen — Patrols — A Round of the Head of the Police — Story of Kadugah.

By day Cairo, in some portions at least, presents a very lively appearance — more lively, perhaps, than that of most European cities. The variety of costume, in form and colour, cannot be surpassed; and at every step peculiarly interesting groups are to be seen. There is no rumbling of carriage-wheels to deafen the ear. Now and then, it is true, a crazy vehicle, imported by some bey or effendi in obedience to the Pasha's command, "Let my people ride in carriages," comes jolting along over the mud pavement of the great streets, preceded by a running footman, who clacks a huge whip with a pistol-like report. Then the crowd unwillingly separates, tumbling into shops on either hand, or squeezing under

archways, or making themselves thin against the walls. But this is a rare occurrence; and camels, which are the waggons, and donkeys, which are the cabs of the country, alone mingle with the mass of human beings.

Yet it must not be supposed that anything like silence prevails. However sedate may be the rotund Turk, or the opulent Arab, the people generally, when engaged in business, are prone to vociferate. Setting aside the warnings of the donkey-boys—infinitely varied from "Mind your back, O Sheikh," to "Mind your eye, O girl!"—and the expostulating curses of some man or woman bewildered by being told to move in every direction at once,—there is a constant buzz of conversation, salutation, bargaining, and cries of men and women hawking about vegetables or other articles for sale. This tumult continues until sunset, when a sudden lull takes place; the streets rapidly empty; every one goes home to supper; and in about an hour after total darkness scarcely any one remains abroad. All is then silent and desolate. The few passengers that from time to time move along, are preceded, if at all respectable, by a servant carrying a paper or glass lantern. Every one is bound to have a

light of some sort, under penalty of being arrested, lodged in the guard-house, and beaten or imprisoned next morning.

As I have said, the city is divided into quarters closed by gates, each guarded by its special bowâb; but the great streets can be traversed from end to end without obstruction. At certain intervals sentinels are stationed; and from time to time their stentorian cries of "*Gadaï!*" intended to keep themselves and their companions awake, startle the passengers. Scarcely has the echo died away, when a shouted answer, "*Ya saket!*" rising in the distance like the howl of a wild beast, testifies that the warning cry is not unheeded. Private watchmen, armed with formidable nąboots, may often be seen lingering about gloomy corners, or sitting on their benches; and as soon as a step is heard approaching, thunder out a request or order, to testify the unity of God, in one word formidably lengthened, "*Wah-hed!*" This adjuration and the accustomed loud-chanted answer, "There is no God but God!" exchanged now and then in the dark alleys called streets, have a peculiarly solemn effect.

At times the measured tread of a patrol, attended, perhaps, by a few police-officers, an-

nounces, in apparently deserted quarters, that the Government is watchful over the lives and fortunes of the citizens; and now and then a man of the party briskly waves a half-smothered torch, and a bright red flame bursts suddenly forth, and reveals the shining bayonets and white uniforms of the soldiers. Honest men hasten to announce their presence and display their lanterns; whilst thieves slink into bye-lanes, or endeavour to conceal themselves in the deep, gloomy doorway of some large house. There are no police-reports published in Cairo; but burglaries, seldom accompanied with murder, are said to be not unfrequent.

Some years ago, the Zabit Bey, or head of the police — then a more important character than at present — was making his rounds on horseback, accompanied by Abu Halim, the executioner, a saïs, and a torch-bearer. He had passed from the Bab-en-Nasr to the Kara Meydan, and found all quiet; not a soul abroad; not a single suspicious sound in the air. He was about to retire to his palace, when the fancy struck him to explore a mass of ruined houses near the southern end of the square — famous as a resort of robbers. Being a bold man, danger did not

appal him; and leaving his horse and saïs under the shadow of a wall, he penetrated, followed only by his constant attendant, Abu Halim, into the gloomy alleys that intersect the suspicious quarter. He wandered about for some time without seeing anything to reward his industry; but at length a light, twinkling in a distant ruin, attracted his attention. Loosening his pistols, and feeling that his sword worked easily in the scabbard, Abu Halim keeping still at his heels, the Zabit began to climb cautiously over a heap of rubbish, and following a low wall, broken down here and there, at length reached the neighbourhood of the light.

It burned in a small room, the roof of which yet remained, whilst one side was half ruined. Three men—two fellâhs, the other a black—sat there, talking unreservedly, as if quite secure from being overheard. At first it was difficult to understand the subject; but the practised ear of the Zabit at length made out, from very disjointed materials, a most terrible story. It appeared that the black was the slave of a very distinguished person in Cairo, an Effendi, whose name I forget, but whose character for benevolence and kindness of disposition was wide-spread. He had

not long before married a young wife, and had become so enamoured of her, that he had dismissed all his concubine slaves, and had determined to devote himself entirely to the beautiful Kadugah. As he was a very wealthy, besides being an excellent man, every one celebrated the good fortune of the bride; and it was repeated even in the baths among the women, generally so clear-sighted, that she was the happiest bride in Cairo.

From the conversation of the three miscreants in the ruin, the Zabit first learned the falsity of this opinion. Not only did the young woman detest her husband, in spite of his fine qualities; but she was enamoured of a worthless young rake, named Selim Aga, who gave more trouble to the police by his pranks than half-a-dozen thieves. She had already contrived to have several interviews with him, and her passion increasing, had devised a plan for assassinating her husband, and uniting herself in due time with her paramour. It was to plan the consummation of this crime that the black, no other than the lady's confidant, had summoned two villains of his acquaintance to a midnight conference. After some debating of the price, it was agreed that

next evening the assassins should be admitted into the garden, where the husband used to sit and enjoy his keyf with the treacherous Kadugah.

Under other circumstances the Zabit would have at once presented himself, and, trusting to the awe inspired by his position, have arrested the plotters; but he thought to himself that the Effendi, known to be infatuated with his wife, might disbelieve in her participation, and might thus, though once saved, fall a victim at a future period. Besides, it must be confessed that he was not quite sure of the complicity of Selim Aga, and hoped that that young scamp might commit himself so far as to render himself liable to punishment, and thus relieve the police from one of their chief annoyances. He resolved, therefore, to be prudent, and allowed the conclave to break up in peace. Then he returned to where his horse waited, and rode home quite elated at being engaged in so exciting an adventure.

To complicate the affair, it is said that Abu Halim, the headsman, recognised in one of the hired assassins his own brother, from whom he had been separated many years ago. Whilst glaring over the shoulder of his chief, he had not

uttered a single sound that might warn the criminals of their danger, knowing that his own life would thus be perilled; but he resolved next morning to go forth and endeavour to save him, in favour of whom spoke the eloquent voice of blood. Whilst the Zabit yet slept, therefore, Abu Halim was abroad, and directing his steps towards some of the well-known haunts of criminals. He penetrated boldly everywhere, exciting surprise and curiosity, for his office was known, but molested by none. For several hours he passed from coffee-house to coffee-house, from ruin to ruin, and now and then ventured to ask if a man, his brother, with such and such marks, had been there. But he was unsuccessful, and returned, agitated, to the palace.

About an hour afterwards, one of the police spies came, and whispered into the Zabit's ear: "Abu Halim has been abroad this morning, inquiring for his brother, described in such wise; but he has been disappointed." "Good!" said the Zabit, who understood all; and anticipated with ferocious glee a more dramatic termination to the adventure than it at first promised.

No warning was given to the Effendi; but immediately after it was dark a number of men

concealed themselves in the neighbourhood of his garden; whilst the Zabit himself, by means of a false key, got in, attended by Abu Halim and two other officers. They went and took their station in a thick grove of fig-trees mixed with bananas, in the neighbourhood of the lighted kiosque, selected as the theatre of the intended crime. When they were in position the Zabit turned to Abu Halim, and said, touching a pistol, —"One word — a loud breath — the grating of a pebble, and thou art a dead man!"

"*Hader!*" replied the executioner, touching his head with his right hand, and beginning to tremble.

The assassins were to be admitted by the same gate that had been used by the Zabit; and in about an hour the black came down the garden, looking cautiously about, and let them in. They hid themselves in an old ruined kiosque, not far from the brightly-lighted new one; and little thought that they were observed from all sides, that the head of the police himself was there, and that every avenue of retreat was guarded.

Selim Aga had only in reality heard some vague hints of what was to be done, and had

turned the off idea with laughter. The fact was, he did not wish a mere intrigue to end in a marriage, especially in such a way. Kadugah, however, in order, perhaps, to compromise him; had given him a rendezvous that evening, and expected him to arrive as soon as the murder was concluded. She had so arranged her plans, that she felt certain of success; and believed that the death of her husband would be attributed to any one rather than to herself. It happened, however, among other things, to her disappointment, that a former mistress of Selim, who lived in the street, and who still loved him, had noticed his frequent visits, and on that night had seen the police officers concealing themselves. She guessed that the young rake might be in danger, and going forth, threw herself in his way, and warned him to retire to his house; which he did.

Meanwhile, servants had brought supper to the kiosque, and the Effendi had eaten, whilst Kadugah waited upon him with more than usual complaisance. She was a most stately personage to behold; and the Zabit, as he looked at her, thought what an awkward thing it would be for him were she not guilty, as he now, having violated the harim, fervently hoped she

really was. Suspense was soon at an end; for Kadugah, having noticed a sign from the attendant black, suddenly, her face changing to that of a demon, rose, and began to pour out all her hate in the ears of her astonished husband. At the same time the murderers rushed forth; but the Zabit, sword in hand, leaped into the kiosque; his men followed; others, who had quietly got over the wall, burst out on all hands; and the three criminals, including the black, were secured.

The horrible scene that ensued may be lightly passed over. The Zabit, with unnecessary ferocity, compelled Abu Halim to execute his own brother and the other culprits on the spot, and then insisted that Kadugah likewise should be put to death. But the Effendi could not be brought to consent, until the Zabit reminded him that she had been seen unveiled by a dozen men. Then the wretched husband hid his face in his hands, and Abu Halim did his work without reluctance. Next day, the Zabit went to the house of Selim Aga and asked to see him. The young man, pale and trembling, rose as he entered; but fell back as if struck by a thunderbolt when, holding out a bloody

handkerchief, the stern official muttered, "From Kadugah!" The story was soon told; and it is said that Selim, well frightened, became a reformed man from that time: but who believes in reformed rakes, reformed smokers, or reformed gamblers?

CHAPTER X.

The Month of Ramadhan — Night Amusements — Sincerity of the Muslims — Festival of the Prophet — European Philanthropists — The Esbekiyeh — Preparations — Stroll through the Camp of Derweeshes — Curious Performances — Gymnastic Praying — The Doseh, or Trampling — Pavement of Human Beings — Passage of the Sheikh — Story of a foolish Fellâh.

THERE are periods of the year when the streets of Cairo, usually so gloomy and forlorn soon after sunset, teem with light and life until long past the mid hour of the night. In the month of Ramadhan, especially—when the poor work in hunger and the rich lounge or sleep all through the weary day—the gun from the citadel has scarcely announced that the upper rim of the sun's orb has disappeared behind the Pyramids, ere a fresh stream of vitality seems suddenly infused into the veins of the city. A chorus of pious exclamations bursts

up, and every one sits down to breakfast with royal punctuality. The shops remain open, and are lighted with a profusion of oil-lamps; the traders sit smoking by the side of their merchandise, rather with a view of receiving their friends than of effecting sales; and even in streets not devoted to business you constantly meet parties of young men furnished with bright paper lanterns, strolling in search of Pleasure. At a certain age we have all obeyed an irresistible impulse to wander forth, without any definite plan, in the vague hope that this goddess will accost and seduce us.

I shall not here describe the pains and pleasures of Ramadhan; for this month of fasting and debauchery is one of the features of Eastern life best known, because, perhaps, most remarkable. From what I have seen and heard, I believe that even now the Egyptians obey the ordinances of their religion with considerable good faith. Some hypocrisy, no doubt, exists; there are sham Muslims as well as sham Christians: but, in general, the humblest fellâh does not consider himself authorised to eat an onion before sunset because a French cook prepares the breakfast of the Viceroy at mid-day. If the

powerful, they think, were obliged to conform to divine, they might be made obnoxious to human, laws; and if Hassan the water-carrier presumed to disobey Allah, he might make light of Mohammed Ali or Abbas Pasha. In either case, the world be at an end. It would be fortunate for the Arabs if they could be supplied with a faith more favourable than theirs to the developement of the mind. But a good Muslim is better than a bad Christian; and I would rather trust my life and my purse in the hands of a man too scrupulous to swallow even his spittle before gun-fire, than in those of the turbaned philosopher who, having associated with Europeans, learns to laugh at the prejudices of his people, and eats even pork whilst others are writhing in the hunger-belt.

Some of the most curious night-scenes to be witnessed in Cairo take place during what is called the Festival of the Prophet, celebrated during the third month of the Muslim calendar. It is scarcely possible, indeed, to acquire a correct idea of the singular state of Egyptian civilisation, of the wonderful difference between the construction of the Egyptian mind and ours, without being present at this festival. An

hour's stroll in the Esbekiyeh might open the eyes of many a philanthropist, who still dreams of Europeanising Easterns in a few years by means of strong governments or constitutions, model schools, railways, and other specifics.

The Esbekiyeh is the Hyde Park of Cairo, and consists of spacious gardens, intersected by alleys and surrounded by an avenue of acacias and sycamores, and by a broad drive. It is overlooked by the principal European hotels, and all the Europeans of the place live in its neighbourhood. The fact that the Muslims have continued to celebrate some of their strangest ceremonies under the eyes of thousands whom they know will scoff and deride, seems to signify that they are impenetrable to external influence.

For many days previous to the festival, preparations are made on a grand scale. The most remarkable feature is the kayim, a row of four tall masts, kept steady by a complicated system of rigging. On these, in irregular order, are hung clusters of lamps, each contributed by some pious person, and generally forming a splendid illumination. Beyond are pitched two long rows of tents, of various dimen-

sions, and on the third night of the month these are occupied by derweeshes of all classes, who at once begin their performances under the eyes of the public; for the tents are all open, and lighted with more or less brilliancy. The spectators are numerous and appear deeply interested, muttering occasionally pious ejaculations, intermingled, it is true, with somewhat crude compliments and jests addressed to the high-bosomed virgins who come out to be hustled on that solemn occasion.

It is an hour after sunset. Let us stroll down the street of tents, beginning at the northern extremity. As we approach the kayim, a thousand cross-lights enable us to distinguish a sea of moving turbans and tarbooshes. In various directions, flashing through the trees, torches and lanterns, and strings of lamps hung upon poles, are seen approaching; and by the drumming and the shouting we know that parties of derweeshes are on their way to take up their position for the night. Once in the crowd, our progress is slow; but strange sights occupy the eye on either hand. Here is a small tent, dimly lighted, in which two or three enthusiasts are bobbing up and down with frightful agility.

There is a second, in which, already fatigued, others are crouching beneath cloaks and blankets, sweating off the excess of their devotion. Beyond, in a larger establishment, brilliantly illuminated with a wooden chandelier, some thirty worthies are preparing for a renewed performance. Let us pause and watch them. They all sit in a circle, chatting on indifferent subjects, with the exception of one, a white-bearded gentleman, who stands in the centre, apparently absorbed in contemplation. Suddenly he feels the spirit move, and begins to chant, in a low, measured voice, the praises of the Creator. The audience at once becomes silent and collected, drinking in religious intoxication in large draughts. They soon feel its effect, but know how to subject it to rule. With one sway, every head turns slowly to the right, and then, wheeling round, looks over the left shoulder. "Al-lah!" One syllable of the name of God, pronounced in an undertone at first, accompanies each movement. Back goes the head to the right; "Al—" then to the left, "—lah! Al-lah! Al-lah! Al-lah! Allah!" As the chant of the white-bearded gentleman becomes more animated, the hearers

seem to grow more impassioned, and soon every head rolls with frightful rapidity. It is a wonder the ballast does not shift. "Allah!" It has become almost a grunt, a prolonged howl. The excitement grows too powerful to allow them to remain squatting on the ground. Up they start, still wagging their heads; the grunting waxing fast and furious. Their features writhe with excitement; their eyes roll deliriously. Some of them drop off their turbans and caps, and frantically shake their shaven crowns, still howling the name of God with foaming lips. There is a void in the ranks. A man has fallen in this furious charge for Paradise. Some one takes him by the heels and drags him into a corner of the tent, to pass his fit in peace; and on goes this extraordinary prayer, the motion having now become a duck forward, in which the nose nearly touches the knees; whilst "Allah!" is jerked out almost as one syllable, and seems to proceed, not from the lips, but the stomach. It is difficult to convey by words an idea of this extraordinary scene. I feel that what I have written falls far short of the truth; and that it would have been better, perhaps, to say simply that the derweeshes pray with the

energy of madmen and the regularity of automata.

At first sight, this plan of communion with God by means of gymnastics seems simply ridiculous, and it may, without injustice, be set down as a corruption. However, as it appears that the result obtained is a high degree of enthusiasm, and, for a time, a wonderful lucidity of intelligence, it may be classed with other macerations of the flesh, and allowed its due share of indulgence as one of the means by which matter may be subjugated that spirit may be free. There are climes and periods that seem to stand in need of some such process, and in which mental torpidity, like the effects of soporific poison, can only be combatted by convulsive dancing.

Perhaps the most remarkable and characteristic scene I have ever beheld was the Dosch, or Trampling, which takes place during the Festival of the Prophet by day. It is peculiar, I believe, to Cairo, and is a kind of ordeal to which the derweeshes and others subject themselves, in order to demonstrate the purity of their lives. A common opinion among the sceptical is, that the whole is a piece of juggling; and when I went

to witness it, therefore, I determined to watch most carefully.

I took up my station near the principal tent of the derweeshes, and waited patiently for the appointed hour. Many thousands of people were assembled, some occupying the summit of a great wall, others the branches of trees, others the house-tops, and the remainder crowding amidst the tents to the imminent danger of their stability. A few women and lads had managed to set up stalls here and there for the sale of oranges, sweetmeats, and sherbet—refreshments not unacceptable, as the day was hot and dusty. The time we had to wait seemed very long; and we began to fear that the ceremony had been put off. However, at last, by the ant-like movements and growing excitement of the crowd, we learned that the important moment was approaching.

After about ten minutes of unusual animation we saw, coming from the direction of the Iron Gate, a number of flags, principally green, and inscribed with letters from the Korân. Their bearers, preceded by clubmen, soon succeeded in piercing through the crowd, and forming an alley about six feet wide, in the front line

of which I was fortunate enough to get. The flags were still fluttering in sight, when a long column of young derweeshes, two-and-two, holding one to the other, and those behind with their hands on the shoulders of those before, came rushing down the alley. As they passed they swayed like one man from side to side, uttering in a deep, gasping tone, the word "Allah!" The eyes of some were closed; but others glared frightfully. All were very pale, and perspired profusely. They seemed intoxicated, and were so; some by fanaticism, others by hashish. Most wore libdehs, or pointed felt caps; some tarbooshes; none turbans. They passed too rapidly to enable me to count them; but they must have been above two hundred in number.

I could not see either end of the columns, when they stopped, and, without more ado, threw themselves flat on their faces, side by side, forming a human pavement to the lane. Several individuals, with official bustle, now began running to and fro, arranging a shoulder here, an arm there, a leg further on; and ascertaining that no spaces were left between the sides of the paving-men. These all the time

kept up a kind of convulsive twitching motion throughout their bodies, and rubbed their noses violently in the dust, from side to side, as they grunted forth the name of God in more awfully bestial accents, as the moment of trial drew nigh.

The spectators generally seemed actuated by breathless curiosity; but I noticed with pleasure that one of them snatched up a child, not more than ten or eleven years old, and forced him to make way for a lad of about fifteen. I was myself intensely excited, and could easily understand the impulse by which several believing bystanders were prompted to join the victims. At length a murmur, that increased to a shout, arose, and was followed by a dead silence. There was an eager, forward movement of the crowd. We of the front rank nearly lost our footing; and a scene of unpremeditated murderous trampling seemed on the point of taking place.

What followed was the work of an instant. A stout man, on a powerful horse, preceded, supported, and followed by about a dozen attendants, moved with a quick, lively walk, over the bodies of the prostrate derweeshes. There was no jug-

gling in the case. Every one of the victims received the tread about the small of the back; and some of them threw up their heads and feet, as if the very life had been crushed out of them. Away rode the Sheikh; and the friends and relations of the performers rushed forward to snatch them up, and whisper in their ears "*Wahed*," that is, "Declare the unity of God." Some of the poor wretches, though half insensible, murmured the response with bleeding or foaming lips. Many of them were in an undisguised swoon, and lay senseless and ghastly; others responded with groans. Their general appearance was that of drunken men taken from under the wheels of a carriage. In several instances, the sufferers seemed to have fallen into fits resembling epilepsy; and one gigantic Arab attracted much attention and admiration by the violence of his struggles. Every time his friends touched him on the breast, he sprang from the ground like a fish. This lasted about ten minutes, when he suddenly sat erect, wiped his streaming forehead, and began quietly to put on his turban. I did not see a single man get up and walk away as if unaffected; but I have no doubt that the horse's hoofs were not answerable

for all the effects produced. Religion, and other excitements, had their share of influence; but, at the same time, an Arab confessed that many who were not quite pure had rashly lain down to subject themselves to the ordeal. I ought to add, that though it is admitted that the derweeshes may be injured if not suitably prepared, the success of the ceremony depends principally on a supernatural power supposed to be possessed by the Sheikh-el-Bakri, or his substitute.

A man from a distant village happened once to be in Cairo on the day of the ceremony, and hearing every one talk of the Dosch, inquired what was meant. A baker, to whom he addressed himself, being waggishly inclined, explained, that those who were trampled on were aspirants for the honourable post of Sheikh-el-Beled. Our clown accordingly resolved to go through the ordeal, and when the pavement was formed boldly threw himself down. Ten minutes afterwards he recovered from a swoon, felt as if his back was broken, and found himself surrounded by a number of sallow-looking individuals, who shouted in his ear, "Wahed! Wahed!"

"Wahed, of course," quoth he; "but let me

receive my appointment at once, otherwise I shall die before I reach my village and give orders for Mohammed the tobacconist to be flogged." Upon this the bystanders thought he was mad; and as he continued to talk in the same strain, they seized him, and took him to the Moristan, or mad-house, where he was stripped and chained by the neck like a wild beast. He now understood that he had been made a fool of, and determined to be revenged on the baker. For this purpose he remained so quiet and reasonable that he was released; and a saint who happened to touch him that day, gained great reputation by his cure. He went immediately and bought a considerable number of hashish pills, with which he proposed to carry out his plan of vengeance. Having watched some time about the house of the baker, and ascertained that the master had gone forth, he climbed a wall, and whilst the women were asleep, contrived to introduce one of his pills into each of a large collection of loaves ready for sale. This done, he cautiously retired, and would have been wise had he returned at once to his village; but, actuated by a desire to witness the discomfiture of the baker, he went to him a couple of hours

afterwards, and with an appearance of great simplicity complained, that although he had submitted to the Doseh, he had not received his appointment as Sheikh. The baker was enjoying the joke, when an old woman came in, and said that her son had become mad after eating one of his loaves; then a man followed, himself partially intoxicated, who declared that all his family were maniacs by his means; and so on, until a large crowd was collected. The baker did his best to appease them, and succeeded in inducing them to retire for a while. The clown, who was the cause of the mischief, could not conceal his delight, and our waggish baker understood that he had been paid off in his own coin. He felt certain, however, that the worst of the business was not yet over; and going to his wife's room, he said to her:—

"My heart, it is necessary that thou shouldst play a trick to save me. Go to the leewan, and speak softly to the stranger that is there, and if any one comes in, pretend that he is thy husband."

The woman did as she was desired, and the clown was overjoyed, thinking that he should be doubly revenged on his enemy. Suddenly

there was a great knocking at the door, and four or five men were heard demanding admittance.

"This is disagreeable," quoth the woman; "my reputation is in danger. You must go and open, and pretend to be the baker; and I will call you my husband."

The men were admitted; and having come into the leewan, demanded the master of the house.

"This is he," quoth the woman.

"Nay," said one of the new-comers, "I thought the baker had but one eye."

"Of a truth," exclaimed the clown, endeavouring to show by his familiarity that he was really the woman's husband; "no one is the baker but I."

The words were scarcely out of his mouth, when the men produced sticks from under their cloaks, and fell upon him, crying—

"Woe be to the wretch that put hashish pills into our bread!"

They beat him till he was insensible, and then went away laughing at their achievement. Soon afterwards the baker arrived, and with the assistance of his wife carried the unfortunate

clown forth, and left him for dead in the street; but he soon recovered, and feeling that he was no match for a Caireen, returned to his village cursing his own folly.

CHAPTER XI.

Return of the Pilgrims from Mekka — Approach of the Kafila — Couriers — Temporary Post-office — House Painting — Use of the Pilgrimage — Entrance of the Pilgrims — Litters — Friend-seeking — Grief and Joy — Camping-ground — Mahmal — Escort of Irregular Cavalry — Procession of the Mahmal.

AN interesting public spectacle, characteristic of Egyptian manners, is the return of the pilgrims from Mekka—that is, the official return of the Cairo caravan. It is generally composed of Egyptians, either from the capital or the lower provinces; as the strangers from the west, or from Turkey, generally start a long time previously, and choose the easier route by the Nile and the desert of Cosseir, or by the sea *viâ* Suez. I have never witnessed the departure. It must be a very gay and splendid scene. The return is, perhaps, equally splendid, but with an element of sadness introduced. Many of the pil-

grims have perished by the way; and the shouts of joy with which the kafila is received are always mingled with the shriller cries of grief.

The approach of the kafila is announced by couriers, who ride forward on dromedaries the previous day, bearing letters to the Pasha and to an immense number of private people. In this manner many learn beforehand that death has fallen on their relatives; and when they go out the following morning and ask who are safe, they are merely performing a pious duty, a prescribed formality; for the answer is known and the shrieks of sorrow are prepared. In the villages, the melancholy intelligence often arrives only in a negative form; and when, after long waiting, the pilgrim does not appear, he is mourned for as dead.

The advent of the couriers throws the whole of Cairo into a state of excitement. A kind of temporary post-office is organised, and speculative individuals buy the letters for each quarter, in hopes of making a profit on the presents which custom awards to the bearer. Great rejoicings are prepared to greet the return of the pilgrims who have escaped. The walls of their houses are provided with brilliant

but somewhat rude decorations, in red, and yellow, and green, representing flowers, animals, and even men. Many of the injunctions of the Korân are but lightly regarded in Egypt, not from impiety, but in obedience to some tradition; and I am sure that many fellâh casuists would explain their dereliction from the letter of the book as cleverly as our European doctors.

The institution of the pilgrimage to Mekka is admirably adapted to maintain the unity and immobility of Islamism; and until it falls into disuse there is little hope of the substitution of a more fertile faith. From every district, perhaps without exception, over which the Crescent gleams as emblem, at least one ardent believer departs for the purpose of drinking a fresh draught of fanaticism at the fountain-head. He must arrive at the Holy City in a state of mind peculiarly susceptible of strong impressions. He has braved the perils of the desert and the ocean, and feels that he has accomplished the best half of an undertaking which makes him member of a kind of religious aristocracy, as well as invests him with an absolute claim to a good place in Paradise. No wonder, then, that his prejudices, instead of being weakened, grow

stronger day by day; that instead of being enlightened he waxes more stubborn in bigotry; and that, although brought in contact with new peoples and scenes, he returns laden, not with useful experience, but with a wallet of marvellous stories, that may astound his less adventurous countrymen. Among the witty in the East it is the custom to call any incredible narrative a pilgrim's tale.

I went out shortly after sunrise to visit the camping-ground of the caravan, which had arrived the previous evening. Some of the more impatient pilgrims had contrived to enter the city before the gates were closed; and to enjoy their home slippers and the conversation of their wives; whilst the main body remained under their tents, or in the ruined tombs of old times, amidst which the halt takes place.

The great street that traverses the city, from the Bab-en-Nasr to Sitti Zeyneb, was already occupied by the head of the procession. The whole population, dressed out in their best, seemed pouring forth to greet the pilgrims. Now and then parties of men bearing flags, and accompanied by musicians, hustled jollily through the crowd to meet some particular

friend, perhaps some patron or employer; whilst the uninterrupted line of camels, bearing twenty different species of gaudy litters, slowly made its way in the opposite direction. These litters, if this name be applicable, were, in general, little seats, square or arched, built upon a platform composed of two enormous trunks, one on each side of the camel's hump, and connected by planks. In other cases they resembled sedan-chairs, and were carried by the camels one before and one behind. They were covered with red, blue, and yellow cloth; and sometimes contained a grave old gentleman quietly smoking his pipe; sometimes a bevy of black damsels; and sometimes, being closed, either an invalid or a beauty. Several of the pilgrims rode on asses, stained yellow, ears and tail, with henna, as were many of the camels, in order to show that they, too, had performed the arduous journey.

On issuing from the Gate of Victory, the scene became more animated still. The whole plain that stretched in front of the walls seemed covered by the procession, which had divided into several columns, each winding along towards a different gate, and immense numbers of banner-bearers filled up the intervals, along

with thousands of spectators. Many groups were evidently on the look-out for some well-known face; and every now and then, from different points, shouts of joy and bursts of music arose on the air, to be succeeded, perhaps, a little further on, by the painful shriek of sorrow. Bands of women passed along the procession, crying for Hassan of such a quarter, and Abdallah of such another; and having been told that the road had proved too rugged for them, turned back wailing towards the city, striking their breasts, and tearing their clothes. There was an allegory of human life in action. The great business of the day proceeded with majestic monotony, equally careless of the extravagances of joy and the still greater extravagances of grief. The drums and the tambourines, and the pipes and the lutes, the singing and the shouting, competed with the voice of lamentation; and the impartial sun gleamed down on the whole scene, the murmuring plain, the battlemented city, the arid precipices of Mokattam, the silvery undulations of the desert, and the gardens and groves that mingle with the suburbs to the north.

We pushed on about a mile and a half to

the Haswah, where the Emir of the caravan, with his escort of four hundred irregular horse, was encamped. The tents scattered here and there amidst the ruined mausolea; the horses tied to the long parallel ropes stretched along the ground; the tall spears, ornamented with great tufts of black wool, stuck up near them; the savage-looking Arnaouts, bristling with mustachios and pistols, lolling here and there, threw a French painter who accompanied us into a perfect fit of enthusiasm, and made him vow to execute a picture as big as the side of the citadel.

On a little mound near the Emir's tent was the mahmal, or litter, that always accompanies the Cairo caravan, and may be considered as representative of the government of Egypt, which in this way makes an official pilgrimage every year. In the course of time it has grown to be quite a sacred object, and to touch it on its return, and gaze at the representation of the Kaaba embroidered on its front, is almost a compensation to those who are prevented from performing the pilgrimage. Originally, it was merely sent in commemoration of the voyage of the Lady Fatmeh, queen of Egypt, to Mekka;

but what is intended only as a memorial often becomes a mystery. The mahmal is a square framework of common wood, with a pyramidal top, covered with black or dark green brocade, embroidered with gold, and otherwise ornamented; and is protected during the journey by a housing of rough cloth, which is only removed on the day of its solemn entry into Cairo.

We went next morning to witness this solemn entry. The weather was peculiar. A heavy damp mist covered the plain, so that, as we advanced, the mounds that line the road, and the domes of the tombs scattered here and there, dropped into sight only one by one. Every piece of vantage-ground from which a view could be obtained was already occupied. At the Haswah great crowds were assembled near the mahmal, now uncovered. A considerable detachment of regular infantry, in their shabby white uniforms and red tarbooshes, were drawn up close by; whilst the Arnaout cavalry were either galloping up and down the plain, showing off their horsemanship and brandishing their long quivering spears, or lying lazily about waiting the order to march. A good deal of delay took

place. Probably it was thought propitious to wait until the sun began to dissipate the mist, which soon, indeed, went rolling slowly away into the gorges of the Mokattam range.

By the side of the sacred litter kneeled a camel, the hero of a popular story. Three years previously, the animal which bore the mahmal fell down, it is said, in the desert, and died. This unexampled occurrence caused a mighty perplexity. There were doubts as to the propriety of elevating a common beast of burden to so honourable a post. A halt took place, and the casuists began to discuss and discover difficulties for the pleasure of overthrowing them. At length, so goes the story, a wild camel appeared, coursing over the desert, and came of its own free will to put itself at the disposition of the Emir! So remarkable a circumstance caused a deviation from the usual custom, according to which a fresh camel was chosen every time; and the fine animal I now witnessed had already thrice performed the pilgrimage to Mekka. The Arabs say that seven mahmals, from seven different empires, arrive simultaneously in the Holy City, and that a race takes

place as to which shall first reach the temple. Fortune never fails to give the victory to the Egyptian.

Two bands, an European and a native, suddenly struck up simultaneously, producing a frightful discord of sweet sounds. The escort began to gather, and the crowd to rush into line along the road. We knew that the procession was about to commence, and hastened back to take up a position we had marked out near the city gates, on a mound, from which a full view could be obtained of the road. The collected people, especially the women, seemed anxious and excited, and devotional exclamations resounded on all sides. At length the burnished musical instruments, and the glittering bayonets of the Nizam, made their appearance, slowly clearing the animated crowd; and then came the mahmal, raised aloft on the camel's back, and swaying to and fro. As it advanced, the shouting became vehement and enthusiastic; and the front ranks of the spectators broke their line to rush forward and touch the sacred object. Many who could not get sufficiently near raised their hands, as if to snatch a blessing from the air, and others crowded round the successful,

that the influence might be communicated at second-hand like an electric shock.

Immediately behind rode an object even more remarkable in my eyes. This was the Sheikh of the camel, a stout hale, old gentleman, scarcely clothed, except with the hair that grew all over his body. His head was bare and bald, and as he moved he rolled it from side to side with the perseverance of a Chinese doll. He accompanies the caravan during its whole journey; and from the moment he leaves Cairo until his return, he never ceases to wag his head in that extraordinary manner. It is impossible that his brains can remain in the right place.

The remainder of the procession was composed of the Emir and his suite, mounted on richly-caparisoned horses; a group of camels with gaudy saddles, decorated with flags, all recipients of pensions from government on the plea of having borne the mahmal in years gone by; a band of native musicians; and a large body of irregular cavalry, armed with spears and firelocks—a rough, wild-looking, uncouth set, riding in a disorderly crowd, now simulating a charge, now reining in their sturdy little horses, now dispersing here and there with wild cries,

until they collected to dash at a brisk trot through the sombre archway of the Gate of Victory. The crowd followed them with a roar of enthusiasm, and as long as we remained at our post continued to flow in an unmitigated stream, so that there was evidently no chance of our catching the mahmal again. We therefore rode round to the citadel, where we arrived in time to take up a capital position overlooking the great square of Rumeileh and Karameidan. Into these the crowd soon began to pour, and presently the procession, at a brisk trot, burst out from near the mosque of Sultan Hassan, and made for the spot where Abbas Pasha and other grandees were waiting to receive it. A hollow square was now formed, and—the band appropriately striking up the polka—the camel that bore the sacred litter ran seven times round at increasing speed, until it finished off with a jolting gallop of most comical effect. A tremendous roar of applause rewarded it for its pains; and this important ceremony, which had kept all Cairo in a state of excitement for days, was concluded.

CHAPTER XII.

An Excursion to Sakkârah — Cold Morning — Hot Wind — Zobaahs — Ferry of Toura — Mending a Gisr — Forced Labour — Arrival at Mitraheny — Recumbent Statue — Petrified King — Reach Sakkârah — Disappointed of Lodgings — Interview with the 'Sheikh-el-Beled — A Difficulty — Taking the Census — A New Version of the Bed of Procrustes — A respectable House in the Village — Arrival of a Stranger — Gathering for Supper — Hob-and-nob with the Sheikh — Dessert — Antiquity Venders.

One of the most interesting excursions to be made in the neighbourhood of Cairo is to Memphis, Sakkârah, and Dashour. I have performed it several times, but remember my early visits with most pleasure, because it was on those occasions that I obtained my first accurate notions of life in the villages. In introducing the narrative of an excursion, during which I made a complete examination of the ground, I shall sometimes use the words dashed down almost on the spot, for

they will better paint the excitement produced than the more frigid vocabulary in which memory, less certain of its facts, and perhaps somewhat ashamed of its enthusiasm, generally chooses to express itself. My late visits were undertaken rather with the object of reviving old impressions than gaining new ones.

The rendezvous was for half-past five in the morning; but as we had spent a part of the night in a kind of colloquial reverie, no one seriously promised to be punctual. Where, indeed, the necessity for haste? Time was before us. If we could not return that day, we could the next, or the next—in a week, in a month, if we chose; and though we knew there were no hotels on the road, not one of us faltered on that account, or was much alarmed at the idea of being obliged to burrow in the sand, or creep into a tomb for shelter. However, we were off early enough to suffer from the cold; and when our little caravan at length issued from old Cairo on our way to the ferry of Toura, it was with blue cheeks and red noses. Here, however, our sensations underwent a change; a south wind was beginning to blow, and to kick up an awful dust on the plain and the desert. The whole atmo-

sphere was soon filled with a sandy vapour. The Pyramids themselves disappeared in the dim distance, or showed now and then like spectres through the gloom. The sand-storm was felt by us with only mitigated force; but from the parched summits of the embankments and the surface of the fields, already scorched by the nearing sun of spring, dense but isolated clouds came sweeping along, and now and then threatened to choke us. The river, of which in our deviating course we caught occasional glimpses, was crisped with short dancing waves, whilst here and there large banks, or points, or islands of dazzling white sand, were covered with a driving vapour, that clung to the ground at first, but at length whirled aloft into the air. On both horizons, a procession of giant zobaahs, or columns of moving sand, supposed to be raised by travelling ginns, were marching from south to north.

At length we reached the ferry of Toura, where a scene of fierce wrangling took place between our lads and some boatmen. At least it had the outward appearance of fierceness; but this is always the preliminary of a bargain. Meanwhile we sat down and waited until matters arranged themselves. It is the best method. Give

free play to the eccentricities of the people among whom you sojourn or wander. You only waste time by bringing your eccentricities in contact with theirs. Some travellers think themselves bound to bully "the natives" wherever they go; but, to my mind, there is no more disagreeable concert than half-a-dozen storming Englishmen and a score of blaspheming Arabs.

On reaching the other side, our way lay southward, along a winding gisr, that now skirted a canal, now traversed a vast grove, now developed its serpentine line across the open fields. I remember passing on another occasion along this same road and finding a large gang of fellâhs—five or six hundred—engaged in renovating the embankment. The population of several villages had been turned out. It was a case of forced labour, and lazily and carelessly done. Men, boys, and even women, worked listlessly with mattock and basket, under the eyes of their taskmasters—Arabs like themselves, but executing the orders of government—armed with swords as ensigns of authority, and whips as encouragements to industry. I noticed that, though they might have served a double purpose of utility, by taking the earth from the bottom of a shallow canal, left dry by the receding

waters, they actually preferred digging deep useless holes here and there in a field covered with green corn!

Though the wind had in a great measure subsided, we were often troubled with whirling sand-laden gusts; and where the country was open, could see numerous little clouds carried swiftly along the line of the distant embankments. The desert and the Pyramids were still nearly concealed by a veil of haze. After a long ride, a reedy pond covered with wild ducks, a stone bridge, and some sluice-gates, warned us that we were approaching the buried skeleton of Memphis. Vast mounds rose on all hands among the palm-trees, evidently the remains of a continuous wall of unburnt bricks, and we were soon moving along the sward-covered sloping banks of the lake, in which the palm-groves that cover the site of the ancient city admire their graceful forms. Behind, in a hollow in the ground, was the colossal statue which we had come to see. It lay on its face, its pensive brow buried in mud, and part of the features concealed by some still lingering water. The Arabs call it Abu-l-Hôn, and say it is a giant king, turned by God, "in ancient times and seasons past," into

stone, for some great crime. They are not at all astonished at the interest felt by infidels in this petrified sinner, because we come of the same accursed stock, and feel deserving of the same punishment. A few hovels rising amidst the palm-groves near the statue bear the name of Mitraheny, formerly a place of some importance, but now not even wearing the appearance of having seen better days. Here dwelt old Fatmeh, the guardian of the fallen monarch, who could have told strange things of his history, had any been curious enough to question her.

From Mitraheny we pushed straight across the fields for Sakkârah, where we intended to establish our head-quarters. On a former occasion we had provided ourselves with the key of an empty house, where we had put up during our stay; but on this had trusted entirely to chance. We went straight to our old lodgings, but found them occupied by a Levantine from Cairo, come out for the benefit of his health. A sad disappointment; but we knew the remedy, and demanded to be conducted to the house of the Sheikh-el-Beled. We found this functionary, a stout, well-looking fellâh, in a white turban, seated on a mat in the dusty entrance of a great building,

or agglomeration of small houses, surrounding a large court-yard. He received us politely, but made a woeful grimace on learning our errand; and after some hesitation and divers savage plucks at his beard, said that we could not be allowed to pass the night in the village. Wherefore? Because our servants were unprovided with passports, and among them, therefore, might be some runaway from another district. We expostulated, at first without result; but two Arnaout officers, as respectable-looking as such men can be, who were with the Sheikh, came in as mediators, and after an almost interminable parley matters were satisfactorily arranged.

At all times, under the paternal sway of Mohammed Ali, impediments were thrown in the way of the movements of the population; but at this particular period, the ordinary vexatious interference was redoubled. The principal reason was the taking of the census, which occupied many months, and in the details of which a pedantic correctness was affected, whilst the general result was falsified in the most glaring manner. A record was attempted to be kept of the motions of every fellâh; and measures of barbarous severity were resorted to to procure accurate returns.

The Sheikh, of course, gave in the first report; but as it was suspected that, for various reasons, little reliance could be placed on this, it was controlled in the following manner. Bodies of horse used to ride up to a village at night, make a cordon round it, keep guard until morning, turn out the people, count them, and if a single error was discovered—woe to the Sheikh! An immediate beating, and a subsequent condemnation to the galleys, were sure to follow. I once saw a string of these functionaries arriving in Alexandria to undergo their punishment. Yet false returns were very frequent, in spite of the almost certainty of detection. On one occasion, it is said, a Sheikh purposely omitted to mention a black slave which he possessed. Shortly afterwards, a cordon was made round the village at night. The elders assembled to discuss the case; and it was actually decided that a child, only a few weeks old, that had been included in the census, should be murdered, to reduce the number of the inhabitants within proper limits. The fact became known, probably because the mother was not persuaded of the necessity of this Spartan proceeding.

We had no reason to regret the lodgings of

which we had been disappointed. The Sheikh caused us to be conducted to the outskirts of the village, where two large rooms had been cleared out for our reception. They were in an irregular pile of buildings, something like a poor English farm, with a court surrounded by stables and outhouses. A narrow staircase led first to a large room, entirely open on the eastern side. Within this was another, better defended from the air; for there were only a couple of small windows, closed by solid wooden shutters. The floor was composed of mud beaten hard, and capable of being swept smooth and clean; the roof of palm-trunks; and the walls of stone plastered with mud. We chose to establish ourselves in the outer room, as more airy and convenient; and were soon provided with the rough materials of a divan.

Soon after our arrival a stout gentleman, in the Nizam uniform, came upstairs, and passed into the inner room, where he established himself in solitary dignity. He was a native doctor, just arrived on his Rosinante — an important personage, engaged on a tour of inspection, principally with a view of seeing that the sanitary regulations lately adopted in Egypt were complied

with. Luckily, we had arrived in time; or we should, probably, not have been given the choice of our room. The Sheikh thought it necessary to receive the new-comer with distinction, and shortly after dark appeared, at the head of a long file of decent-looking villagers, to pay his respects. A man bearing a huge wooden dish, that smoked and dismissed fragrant perfumes as it passed, followed; and we understood that a grand feed was toward.

Although our supper was over we joined the party, and politely dipped our fingers in the mess. Excellent eating it was, too; and our exhausted appetites revived to do it honour. The Doctor, the Sheikh, and ourselves first ate our fill; and the dish was then removed further off, that the rest of the company might finish it. They crowded round in a very orderly manner, and soon a dozen arms, tucked up above the elbow, were slowly engaged picking out delicate scraps of mutton, or making neat balls of rice. Nothing can be more decorous or clean than the manner in which even the humblest Arabs eat; and, for my part, I do not think it is more disagreeable to sup in this way in company with men whose right hands (always kept from impure contact)

are scrupulously washed before every meal, than to pick with a silver fork from a porcelain plate morsels that have been handled by an invisible cook.

When the water-vessel, with soap and towels, had been handed round, the Doctor, who was a jovial little fellow, began producing from his pockets, as dessert, a number of small cucumbers and vegetable marrows, which he had probably stolen from some unwatched field on his way. Having presented one to each of the principal personages, he began chucking the rest to the inferiors, who had by this time finished their mess, and were squatting on their heels in silent gravity along the walls. The capacity of his pockets amused us; for, having made the round, he had enough left to supply a crowd of grinning boys that filled the door-way. The whole scene, lighted by a dim oil-lamp, was very characteristic, and well illustrated the manner in which this people live among themselves, when unmolested by Government.

Before we were allowed to sleep that night, we had to contend with an immense number of curiosity venders, who insisted on our buying mummied cats and ibises, little statues in clay, wood,

or metal, scarabæi, rings, keys, coins, &c. Most of them affected to crave secrecy, although the son of the Sheikh was present. The trade in antiquities is really illegal in Egypt; but the village of Sakkârah actually lives by it, and numbers of men are constantly engaged, under a regular leader, in making petty excavations. The Government does not interfere with them, being content to seize what they sell, whenever it can be found in the luggage of travellers. All curiosities now taken to Europe are smuggled.

CHAPTER XIII.

Description of the Village of Sakkârah—Gradation of Classes—Destruction of Antiquities—Construction and Economy of an Arab Village—Houses and Alleys—Description of a respectable Dwelling—Residences of Nazirs—Grain-stores—Fellâh Borough when complete—Names of Places—Internal Arrangements of a Hut—Furn—Household Utensils—Comparative Cleanliness—Influences on Character—Tenure of Land—Miserable Condition of the Mass—Food, of what it consists—Early Rising—Evening Amusements—Coffee-houses—A bad Customer—Professional Singers—Family Relations—Occupations of the Women—their Prayers—Birth and Care of Children—Ceremonies—Neglected Children—Ceremony on occasion of the first Shave—Treatment of Infants—Going to School—Early Commencement of the Life of Labour—Industry of the Fellâhs.

THE village of Sakkârah is situated on the confines of the cultivated land and the desert, amidst a small palm-grove, ill protected from the sands by some walls, ruined in many places. These sands have been winnowed, as it were, by the

winds from the surface of the rocky ridge that rises abruptly at the termination of the plain. A very considerable drift had lately taken place, and had climbed over the little mud defences, as I have seen it climb over the fortifications of Rosetta. The village itself is built on a cluster of lofty mounds, which no inundation can ever overtop; and, until comparatively late in the season, is surrounded with streaks of water and ponds, that remain thinly covering the lower slopes of the plain. An important, but very circuitous gisr, conducts to the river, with branches to Mitraheny and Toura.

An artist might make a good picture of this irregular pile of human dwellings and pigeon-houses, intersected by up-and-down lanes and surrounded by eminences of rubbish. A palm-tree grows here and there in a court-yard, and droops its pensile branches over the terraced roof of a two-storied house belonging to some respectable fellâh: for there are evident marks of a gradation of ranks in Sakkârah, which, no doubt, owes much of its prosperity to the visits of Europeans and the trade in antiquities. The ambitious Sheikh has lately taken the stone lining of a tomb, covered with hieroglyphics and

figures, fresh as if engraved yesterday, and of exquisite workmanship, to build himself a harim. I do not like to see antiquities thus desecrated, but, perhaps, such monuments are as usefully employed in this way as when torn down and carried piecemeal to European museums, under the dignified title of historical documents. It is strange that antiquaries do not exert themselves to preserve their materials from destruction in Egypt. I am afraid that the reason is that each has some pet theory, some pet sub-division of study, and cares little for the whole subject. Some have gone so far as themselves to deface an inscription, after having made or imagined they had made some infinitesimally small discovery by its means. For my part, I have little faith in the discoveries alleged to have been hitherto effected. Indistinct glimmers of truth seem to have been often mistaken for truth itself. But a wiser generation than ours may succeed where we have failed; and we have no right to destroy, or allow to be destroyed, what may be so useful to them, what has been of so little use to ourselves.

It will be well here to gather together some few details, in addition to those previously given, on the construction and economy of an Arab vil-

lage. A great number—perhaps the majority —of these places are mere collections of low huts, not standing separately, nor yet in rows, but heaped, as it were, together on the summit of a pile of rubbish and dirt, more or less marked to the eye. The walls, built of raw brick plastered with mud, present few angles, being smoothed down by the hand of premature decay; so that the general effect is that of a succession of cells irregularly scooped out of a rounded eminence. Little tortuous alleys conduct to the central habitations. There is no visible mosque, but a room is generally set apart for public prayer. Around and amidst these huts rise palm-trees, one or more of which belongs to each family.

Larger and more important villages offer a greater variety of features. Though the mass of houses is still only of one story, many have upper rooms used as dwelling-places, whilst underneath are stores and stables for donkeys, buffaloes, goats, sheep, &c. The house we occupied on our first visit to Sakkârah was of this kind. A rough-made door in a dead wall admitted us to a court, in which it would have been difficult to swing a cat. Around were two

or three entrances to the lower chambers. An external staircase led to the first floor. Here were three rooms tolerably comfortable. Round the principal one ran low mud divans, on which we spread our bedding. The air was admitted through small windows, with wooden bars crossed, and excluded, when necessary, by shutters of solid board. To reach the other apartments we had to go out, as in many fine city houses, upon the landing-place, where another door opened into a very good room abutting on a parapetted terrace, at the extremity of which was the third and last piece. This division was intended for the family, whilst the chamber first mentioned was reserved for the master and his male visitors. The roof and floor were composed, as usual, of palm-rafters, laid close together and covered with a thick coating of clay, quite sufficient to keep out the few rain showers that occur.

The dwelling of the Sheikh, as I have mentioned, was on a still larger scale; and very neat white houses, surrounded by gardens, are sometimes seen in the neighbourhood of the villages, belonging to Nazirs and other great men. Most populous places have a shoonah,

or grain-store, attached, consisting of some buildings and a vast courtyard, with lofty walls, closed by a respectable gate. The indented parapet of a terrace in the Saracenic style, alone, sometimes, announces the presence of a mosque: but a pepper-box minaret is generally added; and, not unfrequently, this Muslim steeple is endowed with forms and proportions highly creditable to the fellâh architect. When a coffee-house with a carved wood-work front; a barber's shop with lofty, narrow divans; and a sookh shaded by a roofing of dhourra stalks, allowing streaks of sunshine to filter through, and filled with stalls called shops, and women squatting on the ground vending trays of bread and heaps of vegetables, are added, we may consider what may be called the fellâh borough to be complete. The name belled is given to such a place, whilst kafr and nezlet answer, properly speaking, to village and hamlet. The latter word describes, I believe, a colony from another place: but variations of prosperity in Egypt, as elsewhere, have interfered to obscure the original appropriateness of the names used; and whilst belleds have dwindled into hamlets, kafrs have swelled into towns, and nezlets have sur-

vived even the memory of the places from which they were derived.

The internal arrangement of a fellâh house is extremely simple; but most of those I have entered had two rooms. In some parts of Upper Egypt these rooms might be compared to two shabby bee-hives, about six feet at the widest part, hollowed out, and leaning one against the other; but the apartments are often more spacious, and furnished with mud divans raised a few inches from the floor. The furn mentioned in the story of Sheikh Abd-el-Haï is the most important piece of furniture. It is a kind of permanent bedstead, built of brick, and containing an arched stove or oven, which serves to give warmth in winter, especially at night, as well as for the purposes of cooking. The whole family, father, mother, and children, sometimes spread their mats on this bed of ware, which, being fed with dung-fuel, bakes them gently until morning. It is inhabited by a peculiar devil, a kind of salamander, whose permission is politely asked before a fire is lighted. Chairs and tables are, of course, unknown and undesired by the fellâh; but some of them possess a sort of dish-stand a few inches high,

circular, and called a sooffra, resembling the article of furniture used in the cities, but much lower, and of one piece. Some earthen pots and dishes of various sizes, a large wooden bowl, and one or more huge amphoras, without handles, used at once for fetching and filtering water, form the usual utensils of a fellâh housewife.

If I admit that the poorest class of dwellings which I have described (supplied but with very low doors, and windows only about six inches square) cannot be visited without some danger of suffocation and some offence to delicate nostrils, I do not allow this to be matter of reproach to the owners. Clean poverty and healthy misery are not to be met with every day, neither in Egypt nor elsewhere. A starving vulture neglects to polish his feathers, and a famished dog has a ragged coat. However, it must not be supposed that the fellâh is a very disgusting animal; or that the perfumed travellers, who are ready to faint if one of them come between the wind and their nobility, have much to say for themselves. With the greatest respect for suffering wherever it may be found—admitting that misery, with all its attendant evils, is an institution created, not by those whom it stings, but by

those who profit by it—I must say that civilised and northern paupery is far more repulsive than Egyptian; and that there are thousands of garrets in England infinitely fuller of terrors to those whose senses enjoy an unjust monopoly of refinement than the most wretched Arab hovel. By the banks of the Nile, it is true, the despotism—paternal in nothing but its impartiality—of one man surrounded by a few pampered favourites—destined possibly to form a future aristocracy, wise to their own profit and sagaciously oppressive—for nearly half a century has weighed on the unfortunate inhabitants; but these poor people have allies on their side which we have not—as a character of wonderful simplicity, a mind not enlarged by knowledge, desires limited as their means; ignorance, in fact, with all its blessings; and, moreover, they have their climate, which, in most seasons, roofs and clothes them; and the Nile, with the soil which it has given; and, chief perhaps of all, hanging over them, surrounding them, penetrating them, a religious creed, which consoles but does not enlighten, which promises but scarcely threatens, which fills them with insolent and bigoted confidence, but never leads them to

commune with their own hearts in stillness and melancholy, never bids the tear to start nor the lip to quiver, never lures the adventurous mind into mysterious regions of contemplation to send it back in anguish and in hope. Thus, the wretchedest fellâh, in his normal state of poverty, if not a more respectable, is a more approachable being, than the outcast of European civilisation. He is tormented by no theories; never relapses into moody reveries, in which society is conceived under the figure of an enemy; never dreams of changing or avenging his condition. It requires a greater degree of cultivation than he possesses to enable him to perceive that the weight which oppresses him is on the earth, and not in the skies. Yet his mind, though small, is round and complete, and ever ready to meet his circumstances; and his *beau idéal* adds so little beauty to the outline of reality, that he never despairs of realising it. Hence, with the persevering industry of an ant or a bee, almost in obedience to a similar instinct, he fulfils day by day, from the cradle to the grave, the various functions of his being, and rarely lays aside the natural dignity of man. Many of his habits are ludicrous or disgusting to a stranger; but he fol-

lows them in common with his whole race, rich and poor. In fine, an Arab of the humblest kind—even a beggar—is cleaner and less degraded by his poverty than the corresponding classes in most European countries; but as the scale ascends, the advantage turns in our favour, and in many respects, though not in care of their persons, Eastern people of wealth are less particular than even the middle classes of Europe.

A considerable portion of the land of Egypt belongs to the Pasha and to a small body of great proprietors. There are, indeed, comparatively few villages that can be called free, whilst almost everywhere the fellâh is allowed to possess a small allotment, which he cultivates when he is able, sometimes at night. The government estates are either worked directly for the benefit of the Pasha, or ceded to speculators, who undertake to pay tribute or rent. On these occasions it is rarely said that So-and-So has taken such a number of acres, but so many villages. The people go with the soil. The man who farms an estate has a right to the labour of those who dwell on it; and giving of wages is often merely optional. This accounts satisfactorily for the miserable condition of the fellâhs, who, it has

been calculated, pay in money or kind, or in personal service, at least ninety-five per cent on the product of their labour. Little is left them above what is absolutely necessary to support life. Wheaten bread is to many an unknown luxury; but millet and maize form a wholesome, if not very palateable, substitute. Meat is rarely eaten, except on great occasions. Mutton is preferred, but buffaloes and goats are sometimes killed. Poultry and pigeons are more common; and the river supplies plenty of tasteless fish. The staple article of food in the lower country is rice, cooked generally with samne or clarified butter, and no salt. Sometimes it is prepared with oil, and the Bedawins season it with quantities of red pepper. Beans and lentils are eaten, prepared in a variety of ways; but many vegetables are devoured raw, as cucumbers, onions, garlic, turnips, and a large kind of white radish. Cheese and curdled milk are sometimes added to a meal. The sugar-cane is sucked as a luxury; and the water-melon, whenever it can be procured, is swallowed with delight. Dates, dried or mashed into a cake, form a wholesome and favourite article of food.

The fellâh is an early riser, and throughout

the year spends a great part of his time in the open fields, where his meals are often brought to him by the women. In the evening, unless compelled to remain working at his shadoof, he returns to his village, his prayers, and his supper. Afterwards, he generally finds time to chat with his friends; and, wonderful to say, in many cases, to spend some time at the coffee-house. It must not be supposed, however, that this latter dissipation leads him into much expense. The place is public; the master, known to everybody, knows everybody. A little coffee, of equivocal origin, mightily diluted, is sipped in thimblesfull by a few. Others take only a whiff at a gozeh, paid for by one, according to some recognised rule of order, but passed round to all. Some indulge in the luxury of an exclusive pipe, only presented occasionally to an intimate friend. I have heard an economical gentleman refuse, against the rules of Oriental politeness, to "drink a draught of smoke," on the plea that he did not choose either on that or any future occasion to treat the company in his turn. Clearly this was a very bad customer to the worthy host, — a one-eyed, ragged lad, ugly as sin, and bland as virtue; but no one hinted that the

prudent man was on that account one too many in the house. On the contrary, he sat there quite at home, squaring his shoulders and spreading out his knees, and monopolising a goodly share of the conversation. This individual, not being able to afford the stimulus of coffee or tobacco, seemed to aim at intoxicating himself by swearing. His favourite oath was "*Wallah-el-Azeem*," "By the most excellent God!" words used by all the irreverential fellâhs about fifty times a-day; and not only did it figure in his conversation for at least one half, but instead of using it like his fellows, with no more emphasis than "bread and cheese," he seemed to hawk it out with an energy and unction that intensified it into atrocity.

Sometimes, on these occasions, a rakish-looking lad is employed to sing; and surely neither Sontag nor Grisi was ever listened to with devouter attention than are these village nightingales. Many of them have sweet voices, but most not; and as in their case, likewise, talent and ugliness seem to go together, these exhibitions, adorned by the performers with all sorts of quaint affected gestures, and ungraceful contortions—they sometimes quaver behind their

concaved hand like ploughmen hallooing to their fellows fields away—are not pleasing to the unaccustomed eye. The fellâhs, however, delight in them, criticise every note, and are lashed into enthusiasm by every fine passage. It is amusing to see a knot of half-naked virtuosos, in real or sham ecstasies, wagging their heads, turning up their eyes, sighing like furnaces,—playing, in fact, all the inane antics of amateurs desirous to draw attention to the fact that they are in an agony of scientific enjoyment. The more popular way of expressing admiration is by the sonorous grunt, in which the name of Allah is torn up like a mandrake from the depths of every stomach.

In his relations with his family, like most people low in the scale of civilisation, the fellâh is somewhat inclined to play the master. He is affectionate, but rough, to his wife and children; and rarely finds an obstacle to his will, except from the old women, who are famous in the villages for shrewishness and intemperate eloquence. The fellâha is hard worked. Not only does she do the household drudgery, but she washes clothes, carries burdens, and every day fetches water from the river, if at all accessible;

otherwise from some canal or pond. On these latter occasions she spends often a great deal of time in gossiping, if she happen to meet with other women; but when alone she says her prayers, and though old residents will tell you that Egyptian females never pray, I have seen them performing all the regular genuflexions by the side of their large water-jars. I remember once, too, at the Feast of the Prophet in Cairo, observing an old lady, actuated by a fit of enthusiasm, advance towards a circle of grunting derweeshes, and standing a little apart, join them in their bowings and their duckings, and sometimes indulge in a kind of religious dance.

On the women, of course, devolves the chief care of the children, when those anxiously desired blessings are bestowed. The occasion, if circumstances permit, is celebrated by a festival; but generally not. It sometimes happens that the interesting event takes place in the open fields, or by the margin of the river. Then some companion matron, after performing a ridiculous ceremony to prevent the ingress of a devil, whispers the call to prayer in the ear of the new-born — not, as was originally intended, to claim the child at once as a Muslim, but merely

as a charm. The next care is the bestowal of a name; and it often happens that this important matter is left to chance. A boat is seen, for example, passing up the river. The father hails it, and explains the case; and the most ready of the crew shouts out "Mohammed," "Mustafa," or "Ahmed," as his fancy may suggest. The decision is always accepted; and children named in this way are esteemed lucky.

From that time forward mighty little care is taken of the young fellâh — at least, to all outward appearance. He is weaned as late as possible; but when he can walk, is left to toddle about all day among the poultry and the goats, as naked as when he received the doubtful blessing of life. He is never or rarely washed; and swarms of flies constantly settle about his eyes and any scratch he may receive. Sometimes, on the first occasion when the little believer's head is shaved (an operation which I have seen performed at the mother's breast), there is a kind of rejoicing answering to our christening; and a victim, slain at the tomb of a Sheikh, is eaten for the good of the child's soul. Babies are at first often carried on the backs of the mothers, wrapped in a mantle; and, so re-

laxing is the climate, are sometimes given suck in that position. Afterwards they straddle across the left shoulder. A fellâha nurse, when sitting, seldom takes her charge in her lap, but poises it sideways on her ankle. Great misery occasionally induces a mother to sell or expose her child, but tenderness and affection is the general rule.

When a boy reaches the age of seven or eight years, he is, even in the villages, sometimes sent to school, where he learns to read and write a little, but rarely enough to be of much use to him in after life. Very shortly his services are required to attend with his sisters on the cattle, or to go out into the fields, armed with a sling, to frighten off the birds from the crops, or to join in various agricultural occupations. Boys and girls, too, are constantly seized to work at the gisrs and canals. In fact, the life of labour begins early, and continues, with rare intervals of repose, until the end.

It is a great mistake to imagine, as many do, that the fellâhs are a lazy race. They are not, it is true, possessed of the persevering energy by which some northern nations are distinguished; but at times they work admirably. If they are often listless and slovenly, it is because they are

ill-paid or not paid at all; or because any well-being they may create for themselves becomes a fresh excuse for oppression: and as constant labour has no charms in itself, it would be absurd in them to exhaust their strength without any prospect of advantage. It is a recognised commonplace, that in hot climates all men are prone to indolence, and I have felt its truth in my own case; but I must say that I have never seen a fellâh stint his labour when properly rewarded.

CHAPTER XIV.

Morning Scene from the Sheikh's House—Start for the Pyramid District—the Throne of Pharaoh—Great Pyramid of Dashour—Interior—Hard Work—Climb to the Summit—Return to the Sakkârah Group—Further Explorations—Extraordinary Underground Chamber—Subterranean Travels—Ibis Mummy-pits—Curious Specimen—Exciting Adventure—Vast Extent of the Pits—Ancient and Modern Times.

As I have said, we used to make the village of Sakkârah our head-quarters whilst we explored the surrounding country. Very few more characteristic scenes can be imagined than that which presented itself in the morning from the great window of the apartment in which we were encamped. The sun rose above the bold outline of the Arabian chain of hills, cut up with valleys and defiles, and dotted with the yawning mouths of vast caverns. Far to the north, pencilled against the ultramarine skies of the Delta, hung, over a sea of palm-groves, the dizzy mina-

rets and prodigious dome of the new mosque of Cairo; whilst to the south a dim perspective of hills and plains, of green embroidered with gold, tempted the imagination onward to the fervid regions of the tropics. The mighty Nile was rather felt than seen in this glorious prospect, shining only here and there at the bottom of narrow vistas in the interminable groves, between which and the village stretched, as it were, a whole province of dewy fields, splashed with water-spots. Streaks of blue smoke were rising from various houses around.

We hurried, says my journal, over our breakfast, and, accompanied by the Sheikh of Sakkârah himself, started for the Pyramids of Dashour. When once we had clambered up the defile leading to the desert, we got among a cluster of little pyramids, or rather remnants of pyramids—mere mounds, in many cases. Near them is a curious square structure, built upon a rocky basis, which the Arabs call the Throne of Pharaoh. It is vast and massive, more like the basis of a fortress than a seat for mortal man, and may have been the commencement of a pyramid.

Leaving the Sakkârah group, we crossed a

broad level table-land towards the nearest pyramid of Dashour. Around were strewed numerous petrifactions, much resembling those on the opposite side of the Nile, with immense quantities of flint and pudding-stone. On arriving at the base of the pyramid, we found that access to the passage was far more difficult than at Ghizeh. However, we were used to climbing, and effected an entrance. The plan of the interior is very simple. A long, sloping gallery, at about the same angle as at Ghizeh, leads you down to a low passage, by creeping through which admission is gained into a chamber of peculiar construction, the courses of stone that form the sides lapping over one another, each a few inches, until, at the height of near forty feet, they join overhead. The heat in this chamber was intense, and we were quite exhausted with fatigue; for the uncleared gallery is so encumbered with huge stones, that the work of descent is very laborious. However, after a moment's hesitation, we resolved to penetrate to the second chamber, which is nearly on the same level with the first, but approachable only by a low passage about a foot high, with a pavement formed of rough pointed

stones. In our enthusiasm we did not wish for the wisdom of the serpent, which might have kept us out of this oven, but for his suppleness, which might have enabled us to get in with ease; so, with the exclamation "*Coraggio!*" we threw ourselves on our faces, and, each armed with a small taper, reserving one hand to assist our progress, proceeded to insert our heads into the passage. I went first, and in about a minute found, by kicking up my heels, that I was all in, and, consequently, that I had advanced about five feet six inches. A small intimation from behind also informed me that I had grazed the nose of my eager companion. Well, on we worked, finding that, to increase the agreeableness of the matter, the passage made a slight descent, quite sufficient to suggest the idea of an apoplectic fit. It was frightfully hot, and the perspiration burst out at every pore. Now and then, I heard a smothered voice from behind inquiring if I saw land, and also if I could not kick up a little less dust; to which I responded by a stifled groan and a desperate struggle onwards. The end, however, did not yet appear; and once or twice the idea suggested itself that such a

thing might not exist; which would have been rather unpleasant, for positively it would have been impossible to get back without turning round, and we could no more turn round than can a ram-rod in a gun-barrel.

At length I thrust my head and my right arm, with the taper, into an open expanse, and, giving my knees a last cut against a sharp stone, managed to extricate myself and to stand up, giddy and faint, in the inner room. My first thought when I had slightly recovered was, not to gaze around, but to ascertain the fortunes of my companion; and I soon had the satisfaction of seeing a huge mass of dusty hair and a purple face emerge, with a desperate gasp, at my feet. In another moment we were both standing upright, but dripping with perspiration and almost fainting with fatigue, in a room which so exactly resembled the one we had quitted that; for an instant, I almost thought we had unconsciously made a turn. As soon as we had recovered and ascertained that there was little worthy of minute observation in the chamber to which we had penetrated, we determined to commence our return, not, however, at all regretting the trouble we had taken; for

what we sought were rather impressions than objects of mere curiosity and antiquarian interest; and there are, perhaps, no grander impressions anywhere to be obtained than in the gloomy recesses of such antique structures as that which we were exploring. How they are introduced into the mind, into what elements they may be analysed, I shall not pause to inquire. Suffice it to say, that these mysterious chambers, whether tombs or sanctuaries, buried beneath some million tons of masonry, inhabited now only by bats, and (say the Arabs) by spirits, cannot be visited without a sense of inexpressible satisfaction and triumph; although they have been a hundred times rifled by the audacious or tender hands of vulgar curiosity or scientific research; although Mr. Smith has scrawled his name on the granite walls, and John Jones, Esq., left his card in the innermost nook.

We soon again breathed the fresh air of the desert, and, after a moment's pause for breath, started to climb aloft. The ascent is comparatively easy, and we had a fine view from the summit over a scene, the chief elements of which I have more than once enumerated. Here we had in addition, however, an immense

expanse of desert, swelling away in great stony waves. Before descending, we pelted the horizon with stones, endeavouring to clear the base of the pyramid; but our projectiles, after describing a vast curve, seemed to return and alight half-way down, after which they took two or three hops to the bottom. A fox was startled by the noise, and, bursting out of his hole, took to flight across the desert, running in a straight line, and now and then turning his head to see if he were pursued.

On returning to the Sakkârah group, being in a groping mood, we resolved to penetrate into the interior of the principal pyramid. This structure has a very peculiar form, and as it rises on its vast pedestal of rocky desert, seems totally distinct in character from all the other pyramids that break the horizon to the north and south. It has five steps only—five vast steps, that together rise to the height of nearly three hundred feet. It looks like a citadel with a quintuple wall, five towers of gradually-increasing elevation, one within the other. At the north-west corner it is possible to ascend to the summit, because the corners of the towers are ruined. Though it is a breathless under-

taking, I have performed it several times. But it was the interior that most interested me. Few travellers take the trouble to penetrate; and the operation is so difficult that the Sheikh did everything he could to dissuade us from the attempt, even asserting that the well and passages were choked up. We determined, however, to try, and were amply rewarded.

The entrance is at the bottom of a great hole or well, about thirty or forty paces from the northern front. One side of this hole is perpendicular, and consists of a wall of loose stones; but the other, though very steep, is practicable. We climbed down one by one, in danger every moment of being overwhelmed with sand and rubbish. An Arab preceded us, and was of great assistance. Arrived at the bottom, I had to stand with my face from the pyramid, and, gradually kneeling down, work myself backward into a narrow crevice. A few large stones, which I had loosened in my descent, tumbled down whilst I was in the act, but I luckily escaped from contusions, and was quit with having my mouth and eyes filled with dust. When I was completely in, the Arab took me by the ankles, and I felt myself slowly

dragged along a low passage for some distance. At length I passed under a block of stone—the lintel of the real doorway—and found space to sit up. Here I was left alone to my meditations for some minutes, whilst the man who had pulled me in crawled slowly back to fetch the next comer. It was a curious position in which to find one's self—on the threshold, as it were, of an underground palace, with unknown halls, and passages, and wells close at hand; so that if I ventured to move, I might be dashed to pieces at once, and be sought for in vain by my affrighted companions. Another dismal idea likewise struck me. I had noticed the beam or block of stone under which I had passed, but was not aware how securely it was placed. Supposing it were to give way, and sink, like a portcullis, across the passage, what labour would not be required to remove it, and open again for me the way to light and life!

I was not, however, allowed much time to indulge in these thoughts. My companion soon rejoined me, and lights having been produced, we commenced descending, taper in hand, preceded and followed by mysterious-flitting shadows, along a series of steep, winding

passages cut in the rock. Other passages branched off here and there, some ascending, some stooping downwards, but we followed that which seemed to lead farthest into the bowels of the earth. At times the rapidly-inclined and zig-zagging gallery rose like a vast crevice overhead; but at others it narrowed to a mere hole; and in one place we had to drop down perpendicularly. At length we issued into an open space; and, instead of rocks, were surrounded with a wall of darkness. I can scarcely believe that these wonderful places were intended merely as tombs. Kings may have caused themselves to be buried here, because that breed of men justly feared the revenge which a brutalised people might have taken on their lifeless carcases for the oppression inflicted during their reigns. But no doubt a gloomy religion performed some of its rites in these underground halls—fit scenes for the most fantastic ceremonies of initiation.

Our four tapers were at first insufficient to give us the slightest idea of the dimensions of the apartment we had reached; and even when we at length discerned the four walls rising around, and afterwards could perceive the gloomy mouths of passages and various recesses or alcoves, we

sought in vain for the ceiling. It seemed as if we were at the bottom of a huge steeple-tower, thrust down by magic into the earth. At last we collected materials for lighting a fire; and standing amidst the huge blocks of stone hurled about over the floor, gazed aloft. The bright red flame leaping up, sent strong waves of light along the walls—further and further, like a mounting tide; and presently we saw, or thought we saw, the summit of this mysterious apartment at a mighty distance overhead. The real height is about a hundred feet, all excavated in the rock; for the entire bulk of the pyramid rises above the ceiling.

In the centre of the floor a vast column of granite, inserted in a hole, like a stopper in a decanter, closes the entrance of a sanctuary or tomb, to which now no means of access remain. A great many passages branch off from the main apartment, some still descending. The principal, along which we struggled for some distance, is half-choked with huge blocks of stone; but it was once a handsome gallery, leading Heaven knows whither, and lined with painted alabaster, if I rightly remember. After proceeding some time in great discomfort, we returned breathless to

the great apartment. The fire still cast up a flickering flame; but darkness had again gathered overhead; and we could see nothing but uncertain shadows. Having wandered about for a while longer among the interminable labyrinth of passages that met, receded, branched off, and seemed to lead to nothing, we retraced our footsteps towards the entrance, bewildered and breathless, but full of a sense of mysterious awe that increased in intensity as memory began to exert its operations. Getting out was much more difficult than getting in; and as we emerged, dusty, begrimed, staggering, and bathed in perspiration from those dismal chambers, and were hauled, half-fainting, up the well into the glorious sunshine of Egypt, we must have looked—and certainly we felt—as if we had returned from the infernal regions.

A great part of travelling in this country is mere mole-work, underground groping, which is not pleasant in itself, but becomes so by the intoxicating influence of curiosity. During our stay at Sakkârah we visited the ibis mummy-pits, not far distant. The first entered would have sickened any less enthusiastic explorers than ourselves. We had to creep like worms for at

least a hundred feet, then crawl over broken pots, through passages of stifling heat, all blackened by some ancient conflagration. The definite object we had in view was to find some unbroken pots containing bird-mummies; and though the Arabs purposely misled us, and swore "Wallah!" and "Wallah el Azeem!" that no perfect specimens were to be obtained but the few they exhibited at the entrance, and estimated at an enormous price, we at length found the right place, and saw these earthenware coffins piled up, like bottles in a wine cellar, at the end of a long passage. Several were open, but the contents were generally half-burnt. At length we found some good ones—one especially, perfectly unique, a mummy wrapped up in a plain bandage, with the figure of an ibis elegantly embossed on the wrapper.

The entrance of the second pit is just under the crest of a little eminence. We deliberated some time whether it was worth while to penetrate; but our love of burrowing in the earth got the upper hand, and in we went. An Arab preceded us with a light, and we followed similarly provided. When I had wriggled under a huge mass of rock that overhangs the entrance, I

found that the man who had gone a-head had disappeared. A faint gleam of light, at the bottom of a descent, showed me in what direction to proceed; but it soon vanished. I was in a curious position. The roof abruptly ascended, forming a large cave, the walls of which retreated out of reach on either hand. I expected to be able to rise to my feet, but discovered with astonishment that I was on a slope of loose sand, the movement of which was gently carrying me forward, head downwards. I endeavoured to bring up, or, at any rate, to go feet first; but this was impossible. I looked a-head to make out whither I was going, and had the satisfaction of observing that the stream of sand, down which I was gliding, fell in a gentle cataract over the edge of a square well, so broad that I had no hope of being able to stop myself by catching hold of the sides, and was reduced therefore to calculate the probability of my soon being dashed to pieces or stifled at the bottom of the inevitable abyss. I called to my companion, with the generous intention of enabling him to avoid his fate; but he replied, with desperate resolution, that he was resolved to share my perils. "Besides," he frankly added, "it is now

too late; I have passed the entrance; there is nothing to catch hold of but your leg!" So on we glided over the stream of sand, endeavouring to be calm, but in reality not at all so. My body was already half over the brink of the well, ere I discovered the swarthy face of the Arab looking up at me. He was standing, with his legs out-stretched, on two little projections, and caught me as I fell. I had just time to look back and see, by the dim light of the tapers, my friend struggling like a great fish in the torrent of sand that now rushed most vehemently down. In an instant afterwards I found myself just beneath the Arab in the well, but lying nearly straight across, with my elbow against one side and my toes in a little crevice on the other. I was compelled to drop the light, which, as it fell, gave me the pleasant information that the well widened instead of growing narrower, and that, although the leap was not more than twelve feet, there was a great rough stone just in the centre! The shower of sand, which had been pouring down the back of my neck and into my eyes and mouth, now increased, and became mingled with stones. This fact enabled me to know that my companion had arrived at the

edge of the dreadful precipice; and not being inclined to be dashed to pieces quietly—actuated also, I trust, by the desire of not crushing *me*, should a spark of life remain—was struggling violently. The Arab, however, seized him also, and placed him in an analogous position to mine, a little way overhead. So there we were, like two beams stretched across the well, feeling very uncomfortable and quite uncertain what was to come next. Whilst we were waiting the decree of destiny a confused murmur was heard, and a fresh supply of sand and stone came rushing down. It was evident that a dozen Arabs at least, imagining that we were safely landed, had embarked on the sand-slip, and were about to come tumbling upon us. Our guide, really alarmed, shouted to them to go back; but it was too late, and all he could do was to wait till they arrived, all of a heap, at the mouth of the well, and stop them with his great shoulders.

In a few seconds afterwards we were down in safety, and after taking breath began to explore a vast succession of galleries and apartments, closed up here and there with walls of unburnt brick. I can give no idea of the extent of these bird-catacombs, except by saying that

they appeared large enough to contain all the defunct members of the feathered creation since the beginning of the world. Some of the chambers were vast caves, and there were hundreds of them. A narrow crevice at a distant point enabled us to creep out.

I have several times visited the handsome tomb, called of Psammitichus, near Sakkârah; but refrain from describing it, as well as hundreds of other interesting objects in the neighbourhood.

In this excursion to the Sakkârah district, many of the points of contrast and resemblance between the present and past condition of Egypt were forced upon us; and if we at times saw visions of regal or priestly pomp and ceremony, at others we called up to view these desert ridges covered with dusty and ill-fed fellâhs, labouring, as we had seen their descendants of the present day labour, with spade, and mattock, and basket, at the edification of these mighty monuments. In the East, all things change and remain the same; nothing is stable, but the old forms perpetually recur; and, not to attempt an enumeration, the half-naked Arab, engaged in rifling the Memphite cemetery, for the bones of his dead ancestors,

in order to sell them, is, as far as we know, in character, degree of enlightenment, and social condition, certainly in personal appearance and costume, almost the exact counterpart of the serfs who built the Pyramids or dug the mummy-pits.

Let me now, after this long digression,—necessary in order to complete the picture of Egypt which I am endeavouring to draw from my point of view—return to the narrative of my last journey, in which to me new groups, new colours, and new details of every kind, constantly presented themselves.

CHAPTER XV.

A Preparatory Trip—Under Sail—Scenery on the River—Bedreshein—Fires made by the Crew—Manners of the Lower Classes of Egypt—Comparison—Arab and English Sailors—Mistakes of Tourists—A Violent Character—Practice of Beating—Roguish Dragoman—A Dialogue—Beating not necessary—Native Routine—Best Plan to pursue—Orderly Character of the Arabs—Conversation of Boatmen—Religious Topics—Story-telling—Ride to Sakkârah—Abu-l-Hôn—Pretty Winter Lake—Guardian of the Statue—Vast Palm-groves—Indigo Manufactory in the open air—Account of the Egyptian Dyers—Anecdotes—Curious Customs—The Night of the Drop—How to destroy Bugs—Foreseeing the Future—Prejudice of Levantines—Story of a Rashidi and a Jew.

As we had to wait for an addition to our party from Alexandria, we resolved to spend the time in an excursion to some of the neighbouring districts. Leaving Tebbâneh, therefore, we moved on to Old Cairo as a first stage; and next day,

with a fine breeze, started for Bedreshein. We were in excellent spirits, as were the crew, who thrummed the darabukah and clapped their hands as we dashed up against the current. A breeze to them is comparative idleness; and idleness is joy to them, as to others. The scene is, perhaps, even more splendid than that to the north of Cairo; for the rocks, pierced with Cyclopean caverns and quarries, that may be mistaken for valleys, begin soon to approach the river. Mighty associations again intrude themselves; but I shall say nothing here of Babylon or Fostat, nor of the sufferings of the Pyramid-building fellâhs of old times, nor of the nation that fled from its task-masters along that broad road, once shaded by trees that are now turned into stone.

There is a lovely bit of scenery—as artists say in their unpicturesque cant—just above the ferry of Toura. The glittering white houses of the village are embedded in masses of green, that stand out boldly at the foot of rocks, sliced into precipices by the hand of man. As we advanced, the river seemed endeavouring to display at once all the variety of which it was capable—here expanding into reaches, there breaking into shiny creeks, anon sparkling along the shallow slopes of some

golden sand-bank, or gurgling round the steep banks of a grass-fringed island. The breeze freshened to a gale before we reached our mooring-ground, and the current seemed to roll back in foaming waves towards the south.

The village of Bedreshein is situated at some distance inland, and is concealed from view by a dense grove of palm-trees. The river is bordered by a small plain of fields, not divided, of course, by hedges. There is nothing to indicate the neighbourhood of an inhabited place, except the line of boats along the shore—either loaded with grain or cotton, or empty, and on their return to the upper country, or else belonging to the district. The crews were, in general, dispersed over the country by day, except a few who remained to watch; but at night they collected on the bank, and squatting down in circles, conversed on edifying subjects by the light of a cheerful fire. The fuel is collected from the neighbouring fields and woods, and no one objects to the appropriation within reasonable limits. I remember, however, once, that an unconscientious boatman began to carry off the remains of a broken shadoof; and was condemned by public opinion, both ashore and afloat.

It is curious to notice the difference, in manners and deportment, that exists between what are called the lower classes in our own country and those occupying the same position in Egypt. As far as my experience goes, the Englishman, however fine may be the qualities of his heart, however vigorous his intellect, seems to affect not only a rough and repulsive exterior, but even a degrading coarseness and poverty of language. His conversation, when it is not mere ribaldry — too often the case — moves within the smallest possible circle; and even when he ventures at rare intervals to touch on elevated topics, which really interest him, he jerks out his ideas in imperfect allusions, expressed in deplorably colloquial language, as if he meant to apologise for the respectability of his sentiments by the vulgarity of his words. Instances of this will crowd upon every memory; but as I am on the subject of sailors, I will mention that being one evening on the fortifications of Alexandria, I paused to admire the wonderful appearance of the sun going down in a sheet of vapour red as blood. One of two tars who were walking by was struck by the same appearance, and stopped a moment likewise. "I say, Jack," he at length exclaimed, "isn't

that a *bloody* fine sunset?" and went away laughing, partly at his own wit, and partly, it seemed, as if ashamed of having been entrapped into enthusiasm.

The Arab sailor, who by most writers is abused and caricatured, is a totally different kind of personage. He is not a gentleman or a hero, but neither is he a blackguard nor a savage; and he has other objects in life than cheating travellers, or being patronised by them. It is true that when excited, or during the performance of some difficult manœuvre, he shouts and makes a great noise; but it is quite a mistake to suppose that this is a sign of indiscipline, and denotes confusion or awkwardness. The words uttered form, for the most part, merely phrases of mutual encouragement, or pious ejaculations, uttered not at random, but in measure; and tend to promote unity of exertion. I remember once seeing a traveller grow quite furious, and talk in the usual absurd style about "licking those rascally Arabs," because during the passage of another boat (both tracking against stream), at a point where the current ran at the rate, perhaps, of six miles an hour, beneath a steep bank—a difficult manœuvre performed with admirable pre-

cision—one leading voice cried, "Ya Mohammed!" and the rest replied, "Helak!" the leading voice cried, "Ya Saleh!" and the rest replied, "Helak!" &c. &c. My companion maintained that the lubbers shouted because they did not know what to do, and could scarcely be refrained from falling amidst them, koorbash in hand. In a few minutes we had passed without accident. On another occasion, when under sail, a large grain-boat coming right down upon us, the reis shouted his directions to the steersman, and the crew, as they sometimes will, joined in a measured cry of warning. The traveller, a type of his class, seeing the danger, but not knowing that all necessary measures had been taken to avoid it, and that the cry was for the sake of the steersman, whose view was entirely impeded by the canvass, rushed out upon "the yelling rascals, who had conspired to drown him," and caused such confusion that I was very happy to escape with a collision that nearly capsized us, and only smashed three or four windows of our cabin. In spite of these experiences, the said traveller would persist in giving his advice to new-comers, would enlarge on the noisiness and poltroonery of Arab crews, and would recommend a liberal use of the koor-

bash. It is, perhaps, utterly impossible to destroy this stupid and unmanly tradition, which gives brutal natures an opportunity to indulge their brutality, and tends to develope, even in the gentle, the slave-driving propensity inherent in human nature; but I shall never lose an opportunity of repeating that the Arab sailor has none of the qualities of a man fit to be beaten, except that he does not return the blow, and forgives it in an hour. Besides, the traveller, if he do not understand something of Arabic, may be perfectly assured that he hits the wrong man, for the wrong cause, at the wrong time. The interpreter may be an honest man—some interpreters *are* honest men—but ten to one his standard of morality is below that of an ordinary Arab. That this is the case may, without much experience, be inferred from the desultory way of life of these hangers-about at hotel doors, from the arts of deception and dishonesty by which it is their boast to gain a living, and from various degrading offices, which being required of them they perform. I give, therefore, entire credence to the following report of a dialogue, which I am told was once overheard between a reis, supported by his crew, and a traveller, through the medium of his dragoman.

Drag. (who has already, by promise of sport, &c., created a desire in his master to linger at some very unimportant place.) O Mister, this rascal captain say he won't stop here!

Trav. (at once indignant.) How! He won't? He must, if I wish it.

Drag. Because he want to bake bread at Siout; and it is better to bake here.

Trav. Tell him that I insist on his stopping.

Drag. (in Arabic.) The gentleman says he wants to stop two days here; and you must bake your bread: for he will not stop at Siout except in coming down.

Reis. (expostulating.) But wheat is dear here; and it will be better to bake at Siout.

The Crew. (much excited.) Wheat is three piastres an ardeb dearer here than it will be at Siout.

Trav. What do the rascals say about Siout?

Drag. They say they *will* stop at Siout.

Trav. They will! (taking his koorbash) Shall I beat them?

Drag. It will do good. (Traveller beats; the crew disperses murmuring; the boat stays; and the dragoman passes a pleasant time with his relations in the village.)

I am sorry to say that the reporter did not interfere to explain. Perhaps, however, he would have been repelled as an officious meddler, English travellers being in general peculiarly unwilling to accept gratuitous advice.

Before leaving this subject, on which I could not refrain from entering, I will add, that not only in my own case, but in that of others, even a slight knowledge of Arabic has always been found a substitute for the koorbash; and that, without even this, those who have been wise enough to trust to kind treatment, and to allow a peculiar people to act in their own way, have always been successful. The Turks and great people of the country do certainly use personal chastisement on various occasions; but for certain recognised offences. There is a perfect understanding between them and their followers; and there is no danger that they should knock down a servant or a stranger for warmly insisting that they should not go into a bog, mistaking it for a meadow. Besides, there is always a kind of fellowship and communion between master and man; and, except in moments of passion, there is a far more frequent interchange of civilities and good offices than

strangers are led to expect. As to the *nabooting* before described, it is a totally different affair—a mere matter of business, a peculiar mode of tax-gathering. So is that hereafter to be mentioned, when the forced-labour system presents itself. The boatmen are mere servants, who, for hire and salary, undertake to perform a certain service, and in that character are seldom exposed to rough treatment from native employers. They submit to it from foreigners, simply because they know perfectly well that a complaint made by them, or against them, would have but one result; for it would be dangerous to give an example of encouragement to insubordination. However, I would not advise Europeans to trust too much to the continuance of this passive endurance.

It is a commonplace piece of advice to travellers, that they should see that there is always a man ready to loose the sail in case of a sudden gust of wind. Extra precaution cannot, perhaps, be blamed; but I never observed it to be necessary to meddle even so far. I always noticed that the master of each sail returned of his own accord to his post, whenever needful; and it may be laid down as a rule that travellers should

consider themselves as mere passengers, and that any interference is a kind of mutiny.

But I was going to remark on the orderly and reasonable character of Arabs in general, and of Arab boatmen in particular. As soon as their day's work is over they eat their last meal together, and with one or two pipes, filled from a common stock, to be passed from mouth to mouth, sit down to talk. The reis often joins in, and is listened to with a good deal of deference; but there is generally some man on board who has a reputation for peculiar sagacity, and his voice gets by degrees the upper hand. The subjects are very frequently questions of morality, or points connected with religion—discussed with due gravity, if not with any very remarkable learning. A favourite topic is the history of the various old mosques in the country—the era of the foundation of which, and the remarkable circumstances connected therewith, are pretty accurately known. Our man, Derweesh, was very full of information in the religious department, and, being admitted as an authority, was appealed to frequently. I heard him once relating the details of a zikr, or dancing prayer, which he yearly caused to be

celebrated in his house, at a cost of one hundred and fifty piastres, or thirty shillings. An economist among the audience suggested that it could be done for one hundred piastres; but after an elaborate discussion it was proved that, with due consideration for the performers, the original figure could not be diminished.

At other times, when they were in a less serious mood, the crew would relate stories one to another, much in the style of the Thousand and One Nights — often the same in substance. The prevailing vice of coarseness made itself manifest here, it is true; but as a mere accessory, not as a chief feature. The events related were as varied as human life; and the speakers shrank from no details. On other occasions they sang to the sound of the darabukah; and their songs were rarely comic or absurd, but generally sentimental and full of poetry. I regret having mislaid a little collection which I brought home with me.

Next day after our arrival at Bedreshein we went to Sakkârah, and lunched under the shade of the pyramid. Nothing occurred worth noticing. We were on the look-out for sport, but found none. White flocks of paddy-birds now

and then drifted along the green surface of the plain, and then, settling down, melted out of sight like huge flakes of snow dropping into the sea. A few great herons stood like solemn sentinels, at long intervals, on the embankment; but flew away at our approach, and, making a wide circuit, returned to their favourite spot. Crows were, as usual, abundant; and we saw a desperate fight between one of them and a fierce hawk, who at length got his prey down, whilst the cawing race closed in and seemed to threaten a rescue.

The following morning I went to visit my old friend Abu-l-Hôn—the Father of Terror—who still lies, nose down, in the hollow at Mitraheny, as he has lain for thousands of years. It is a pretty long walk—first through the grove to Bedreshein, and then along the winding gisr to the great grove of Mitraheny. The place is a beautiful one. A small lake in the cooler time of the year, before the thirsty sun comes and drinks up every scrap of moisture except the river, spreads in the centre of the grove, dotted with little islands, that multiply as the season advances. A close greensward, from which thousands of palms spring at

regular intervals, creeps down on all sides after the receding water, which leaves no steep bank, but an almost imperceptible slope. The eye at once recognises a mere winter-lake, and gazes with little curiosity at that shining mirror, which has no mysterious depths—no far-down recesses burying the secrets of the past. Year by year the basin is uncovered to the burning embraces of the sun, and, having worn a green garment for a few weeks, soon becomes a mere parched expanse of dust.

Meanwhile, immense numbers of aquatic birds make it their resort. About sunrise it is perfectly covered with wild ducks, which come back regularly at evening after dark. Herons dot its shores all day, admiring, it seems, their ungainly forms, which it reflects; and a variety of little birds peculiar to the country flutter with dancing flight about its archipelago of sedgy islands. A few ducks lingered in a little creek, but I could not get within shot.

The statue lies near the southern extremity of the lake. During many years it was under the protection of an old dame, who entirely devoted herself to its custody. Formerly, various consuls gave her a little pension; but this gratuity

was at length withdrawn, and she subsisted on the voluntary gifts of travellers—always believing, however, that the English nation would at length hear of the care she took of their property, and reward her by a pension of five pounds a-year. Such was the extent of her ambition. In this hope she lived and died. I found her son occupying the same post, and indulging in the same expectations. He had inherited her little house and some sheep, and professed to do nothing but watch over the comfort of the petrified king in the hole. Of course, however, he works in seasons when travellers are not. Possibly he alone ever sees the statue perfectly uncovered; for very late in the year the nose is partly buried in water. At the time of my visit only the back was visible. It would be good, instead of spending a great deal of money in carrying an ugly obelisk to England, to devote a little to raising this extraordinary statue on its old base, otherwise some fine day we shall hear of its being broken up to be burnt for lime.

Having rendered the protector of Abu-l-Hôn quite happy with a couple of piastres, I returned to the boat. This part of the country

is one of the richest in Egypt. Nowhere are to be seen fatter plains or vaster palm-groves. Towards the desert, as usual, the land is lower, and the canals fuller of water, than near the river, where, even in the end of November, the ground is dry and inclined to be dusty. Here and there, deep excavations, shaded sometimes by a few mimosas, the resort of a family of doves, contain a pool of water. The palm-groves are inhabited only by crows, and hawks, and owls.

Under some sycamores on the way to Bedreshein there was a small manufactory of indigo in the open air. The dye was drying in little hollows scooped in the ground. A few blue men were always lingering about. This branch of industry is pursued in the same small way all over Egypt; but the article produced is inferior in quality to foreign indigo, of which above a thousand tons are annually imported by way of Alexandria. All the blue gowns and mantles of both men and women are manufactured and dyed in the country; and the trade of dyer, though not, perhaps, very lucrative, is followed by an immense number of persons.

The dyers, like the members of most other

trades, form a kind of corporation, both in Alexandria and Cairo, and have a Sheikh of their own. They are generally remarkable for their laxity as Muslims, and, at the same time, for the regularity with which, at stated periods of the year—regulated, not by their own but by the Coptic calendar—they follow certain practices and customs that seem to have a very ancient origin. Principal among these is the Shem-en-Nesim, or going out to smell the breeze of spring on the first day of the Khamsin, about Easter time. On this day the roads are all covered with sallow men, steeped to the eyes in dye, trudging countryward to perform this operation as a matter of duty. Many Egyptians substitute or add the smelling of a freshly-cut onion on getting up; but all the dyers seem to go out into the country, whether the weather be fine or not—whether the air has been cooled by a passing shower, or is scorched by a blast of south-east wind. If questioned as to their object, they pretend it is entirely for the sake of health; but I have no doubt some pagan superstition is at the bottom of this custom. That of eating painted eggs about the same period, especially in the country parts, has evidently

been at least transmitted by the Copts. On the morrow of Good Friday—for what reason I know not—the men, imitating their wives, surround their eyes with a large circle of kohl, and stain the tips of their fingers with henna; and I have seen lads, half in jest half in earnest, mimicking the walk of women on that day. But I never met any one who could in the least explain these absurd customs, which are probably derived from very ancient times.

Near Midsummer, it is said, a drop of dew of marvellous power is elaborated in the remotest regions of the heavens, and falls down always on the same night—thence called the Night of the Drop—into the Nile, which is at once, as it were, impregnated, and brings forth the annual inundation. Many believing people go out to watch for the falling of this drop, and are often persuaded that they see it shooting down like a star towards the river, now shrunk within its narrowest limits. On the same night superstitious families number themselves, and make a little representation of each of their members in clay or dough. Generally it is a mere square lump; but sometimes the head and arms are roughly indicated. Of

course this is entirely opposed to the ordinances of El-Islam, and must be the remains of some inveterate popular prejudice—as old, perhaps, as the Pharaohs. The object of the ceremony is, to ascertain who will live and who will die. If the lump remain smooth and entire, the omen is fatal; but if it crack, as it always does, a good old age is promised. Christian maidens, who are very assiduous in the performance of this ceremony, do so with a very different object, and wish to know whether their husbands will be old or young, rich or poor. This is not the only instance in which very similar superstitions may be found among the Levantines and Muslims. Both believe that there is some extraordinary influence in the air on the Night of the Drop. The former, however, perhaps from long experience, have abandoned the idea that any written charm will exterminate bugs. At any rate, on the night of Saratân, instead of quoting the "Die! die! die!" of the Korân, they put a plateful, I believe, of parsley, on the floor of the room persecuted by bugs, not as a poison, but as an offering; and stoutly maintain that the abominable little beasts instantly begin to emigrate.

In all countries men have an insatiable desire to penetrate the secrets of the future; and believe, with more or less fervency, that certain outcast classes are endowed with foresight denied to the more respectable members of society. The Muslim, like the Christian, admits the claim of the Gipsy to wisdom about the future; and though many native orthodox magicians are ever ready by various means to assist his curiosity, has more faith in foreigners, in Persians, or men from Fez and Morocco. On certain nights, however, he does not find it necessary to call in any assistance, but knows some mysterious word, handed down by tradition, which if he repeat a given number of times before going to sleep, will evoke very definite visions of the time to come. In this way Derweesh once foresaw, he says, the departure of his master for England; and others have learned many interesting circumstances.

But we have quitted the dyers, who, however, observe most of these customs with peculiar attention. They do not know, or seem unwilling to tell, for what reason. The Levantines, who share with them the singular belief

that there is a magical power in lying, say that they are descended from the Jews, and absurdly accuse them of using Christian blood to render their dye more enduring. These ideas are in no wise shared by the Muslims; but I once heard the following story, which shows that they too believe the occupation of dyer to be fitting for a Jew.

There was once, in very ancient times, a Rashidi, or man from Rosetta, who was imprudent enough to form a friendship with a Jew, to all appearance an honest and an upright man. They went together to seek their fortune in Cairo; where the Rashidi petitioned the Sultan to be allowed to establish a bath, and the Jew to be allowed to set up a dyeing-house. Their prayers were granted; and forthwith a number of poor people brought old clothes and rags to the Jew, who gained with difficulty his living in this humble manner. Meanwhile the Sultan took it into his head to visit the bath—the first ever established—and being pleased, went there every week. At this the Jew grew jealous, and resolved to ruin his old friend. He obtained access to the Sultan, and told him, as a great

secret, that the Rashidi complained violently that his Majesty's breath was so powerful as nearly to stifle him. In the East there can be no greater insult than this; and the Sultan, though he expressed incredulity, was mightily angry with the Rashidi. The Jew ascertained when a visit was to be paid to the bath, and took care, in the morning, to invite his friend, whom he wished to betray, to eat a dish of onions and fish with him. The result was what he anticipated. When the bath-keeper came to rub down the Sultan, he kept constantly turning away his head, lest the effect of his vulgar meal might be made manifest. His gesture was misunderstood, and proved bitterly offensive to royal self-love. Without inquiry, the Sultan ordered the unfortunate man to be at once thrown into the river — which was accordingly done. In Europe, the story would almost necessarily end here; but in the East the invisible world comes into play. The Rashidi is received by the King of the Fishes, and meets with divers interesting adventures. Afterwards the Sultan drops into the river a precious ring, which a fish swallows. The catastrophe is a common one in Oriental

tales—mighty grief on the part of the Sultan—return of the Rashidi with the lost jewel to the upper earth—explanation — appointment to the Wezeership—and, finally, the stifling of the treacherous Jewish dyer in his own vats!

CHAPTER XVI.

Foggy Morning—Cross to Helwân—A pretty Village—Observations on Egyptian Doves—Evening Stroll—A young Jack-in-office—Birds—Descend to Massâra—Marshy Country—Sheikh Itman—Stroll through the Groves to Mohnân—Civility of Fellâhs—Tranquil Groves—A Bevy of Children—Anecdote of the Man betrayed by the Wind—Murder will out—Crime in the Villages—Return to Old Cairo—An animated Scene—The Pyramids of Ghizeh—Bedawin Guides.

We had resolved to visit the village of Helwân, parts of which we could just distinguish from our mooring-ground, peeping between groves of palms, sycamores, and acacias, on the opposite bank. One morning, accordingly, we gave orders to cross. A dense fog had preceded the rising of the sun, and for some time afterwards prevented us from seeing the opposite bank. A few boats went floating past, as if in the air—their masts and yards looking like mere threads

through the haze. Presently a slight north wind began to blow, and, piercing the fog here and there, broke it up into detached banks, between which a few phantom sails began soon to be visible, and then the dim outline of the district of Helwân, with the bold line of rocks beyond. The sun showered in its sparkling beams through the rents. We were soon in motion, and leaving the land, that dimmed as we receded, reached the opposite mooring-ground before this untoward veil was entirely removed from between the brilliant sky and the moist steaming earth. For a long time afterwards, indeed, we could see masses of vapour rolling slowly away along the surface of the water towards the south.

A broad lane leads from the river to the village, between a grove of mimosas and a field of giant dhourra seyfee. Half-way, a small mud causeway crosses a canal, already fast drying away into a string of detached pools. There is still, however, sufficient water for the women and girls to fill their jars, and a number of these may generally be seen gossiping together along the bank. The village, which has many neat houses, is approached on all sides between the lofty mud walls of gardens, full of trees, that,

drooping over, form not unpicturesque avenues. An expanse of greensward surrounded with sycamores extends on one hand. Altogether, the place is more agreeable to the eye than the generality of Egyptian villages — principally on account of the great variety of foliage that rustles around it; for there are palms, and sycamores, and fig-trees, and orange-trees, and locust-trees, and bananas, and pomegranates. An immense number of doves cooed amorously in the branches. Silly things, they attracted their assassins. We killed a great many of them here as elsewhere, to my infinite regret. A dove is a most lovely and elegant creature, but very insipid eating. Wild pigeons are far superior, and accordingly, when we discovered this fact, we waged incessant war against them; and indulged our sentiment with respect to the doves. The natives perfectly agree with us in opinion, and actually rank them with pigs and carrion. Some few maintain that they are "hallal," or lawful, and say that they would eat them if caught alive or merely wounded, so that they could cut their throats according to the usual formality. But I have never met with any who would illustrate their opinion. Most of the fellâhs, in like manner, refuse to taste aught that

is the result of sport of whatever kind; but some, like the Bedawins, believe that lead is as good as a knife, if the sportsman utter the name of God in the usual way as he pulls the trigger. I once suspected that the fellâh really respects the dove as we respect the robin redbreast; but this kind of sentiment is not Eastern, and the impassioned lover devours the pigeon, which he poetically invokes as a messenger, without remorse, in stew or pilau. However, I have noticed an exclamation of pity from a man who was working in a field, when a winged dove came fluttering down to his side. On questioning him, however, he merely said that the dove was not good eating, although he thought it lawful. "It is better than raw vegetables," said I. "Perhaps," said he: "but the butter to cook it in?" In an economical point of view he was no doubt right; and it is not unlikely, that any respect felt by the fellâh for the dove arises from his knowledge of its insipidity as food, and that, in this respect, he is on a level with ourselves. Very few tame birds are worth eating: robins have probably been tried, and have become bold by long impunity; doves flutter down upon branches within reach of the hand; and crows, impudently con-

scious of their own worthlessness, parade their carrion carcasses under your very nose, and defy you to waste powder and shot upon them.

In the evening we paid another visit to the village of Helwân, and as the people had returned from their work, were surrounded and somewhat annoyed, though not intentionally. A little boy, who turned out to be the son of the Sheikh, well dressed and sharp-looking, with a gash or short pipe in his hand not more than a foot long—an Egyptian dhudheen—busied himself in keeping back the most importunate of the crowd, and otherwise preserving order. He noticed a strange lad looking on, and, singling him out, asked fiercely what he wanted. The answer was—"I have brought tibn (chopped straw) from Massâra: *Wallah!*" But, in spite of this asseveration, the intruder was expelled with menaces and some blows. No stranger is permitted to hang about a village at that hour.

The number of birds that collected at sunset in the trees was really surprising,—paddy-birds, crows, a large bird like a white crow, in immense flights, hawks, kites, doves,—all gradually came home to their quarters, and, after a few turns, seemed to settle down in a neigh-

bourly manner for the night among the branches. A shot would disturb them for a moment, but they soon drooped drowsily back to their posts, I may say, in thousands, not counting the sparrows, which rushed up and showered down again like volleys of grape-shot.

We rowed with the stream next morning to a village on the same bank as Helwân, called Massâra, which gives its name to the quarries neighbouring those of Toura to the south. These quarries are now worked for slabs of thin, white, fine-grained stone, used to pavé the floors of houses in Cairo; but shipment takes place at Helwân in the present season, because the gisr leading from the desert abuts on the river there. I did not know this, and set out for the hills; but, having climbed the embankment that runs parallel to the river, forming the land-road to the upper country, and traversed a few fields and green expanses enclosed with little walls, I soon found that the ground began to dip, and become, by degrees, more marshy. At length, indeed, the path led to a vast bog, over parts of which spread a thin layer of water, coloured in patches by submerged vegetation, and I was compelled to beat a retreat. The yellow desert began not

far beyond, sloping up to the feet of mighty precipices, all made jagged with quarrying, and pierced with great yawning black caverns.

In the afternoon we crossed, dropping down diagonally to Sheikh Itman. Here the palms rise like a majestic portico from the very river's brink. I walked through a seemingly interminable grove, towards a village called Mohnân; but could not reach it on account of a broad canal, still undrained of water. The village was empty of inhabitants. One or two old men only were seated on benches in front of a small coffee-house, enjoying a quiet pipe. Seeing me on the opposite bank of the canal, they beckoned, and bowed, and smiled an invitation; but I had no inclination to wade knee-deep to them through liquid mud, and having made pantomimical excuses went my way. This is the kind of reception I have generally met with in Egypt. Good-humoured civility everywhere; very little impertinent curiosity; often a disposition to serve. If a fellâh observes you alone with a gun, he almost always wishes you success in your sport; and will sometimes point out good places, where wild pigeons feed, or ducks float in retired ponds hid by forests of dhourra or flowering beans.

The silence that reigns in the vast colonnade of palms between Mohmân and Sheikh Itman has something very impressive about it—especially as similar colonnades stretch on all sides without a single break, a single window, into the surrounding country. When the sun is not at the zenith, only a dim cool light breaks in through the lofty roof of leaves, with here and there long threads of sunshine, up which millions of mosquitoes and motes are perpetually climbing. I fired a shot, and the echoes went rolling away without disturbing a single bird, except one great owl, who passed, drowsily, to a neighbouring branch, and, smoothing his ruffled feathers, soon nodded again in perfect security. All the doves were away feeding in the distant fields, or tracts of halfé grass, or in the neighbourhood of the villages. At Itman, a party of fine children called to me that there were plenty of birds in a large walled garden belonging to one Sid Mohammed, and followed me most perseveringly wherever I went, offering advice and assistance. One little rascal, about six years old, gravely smoked a pipe, and gave himself airs of importance. Some of the girls were pretty enough, and verging on the marriageable age. The whole bevy chat-

tered mightily; and left a pleasanter impression than fellâh children usually do.

A story is told of two natives of Sheikh Itman, who were proceeding together in a lonely place, when one of them said to the other, laughing: "Supposing I were to kill thee, and rob thee of the money which thou hast, who would ever know of it?" "Murders are never concealed," replied his companion. "If there were none other to accuse thee, even the wind would carry the intelligence." A little while afterwards the first speaker smote the other, and having killed and robbed him, hid the body in some grass and went away. A whole year passed, and no one suspected the culprit, until at length, after a violent quarrel with his wife, he burst out into a loud laugh. "Why dost thou laugh?" said the woman, surprised, but thinking that he wished to make it up with her. He replied by telling what he had done, and added: "I laughed because I heard the shutter moved by the wind, and recollected the ridiculous idea of that departed one." Upon this his wife went and denounced him, and when he was led to execution he admitted that he had been betrayed by the wind. Inference: murder

will out—a popular opinion, which it would be dangerous to shake in any country. Let me add that this red crime is rare in most parts of Egypt —at least under the form mentioned in the above anecdote or legend. Domestic executions of unfaithful wives or daughters—now classed by the Government as penal offences, in spite of Muslim prejudice—occur from time to time; and vengeance occasionally arms itself with the terrible naboot, and does its work in the silent palm-groves or out in the wide plains. Death, also, is often dealt in the pitched battles that take place between the people of neighbouring villages, divided by hereditary feuds.

We returned to Old Cairo, and spent some days visiting its mosques and churches, and poking about its unfrequented streets. There can be no more picturesque mooring-ground for a boat than that which we chose. On one hand rose the many-storied houses of Old Cairo, with their crazy wooden balconies and projecting windows, covered all with a coating of dust, much resembling that which adorns a bottle of genuine port, in cellar since the beginning of the century. Here and there remains of bright paint and splashes of dirt variegated the fronts of those tumble-down rows;

above which a minaret, leaning in true Pisan style, and reminding one, if I may be allowed the fancy, of the neck of a star-gazing giraffe, thrusts up its slim form into the serene blue air. An open place, sloping down to the river, forms a market, where small lots of corn, beans, and vegetables and fruit, piled on the clean-swept ground, are owned by fierce-looking viragoes from the fat plains of Minshieh, or soft-eyed natives of Gezireh, or genuine hags of Old Cairo, with long and venomous-looking teeth, and lips distorted by seventy years of cursing, morning, noon, and night. The dealers and purchasers are of an infinite variety of appearance, including Muslims and Franks, Arnaouts and Bedawins, inhabitants of town and country, in either gown or silk caftan, long loose breeches, or the elegant Nizam, turbans or tarbooshes or hats, red shoes or black boots, naked legs or white stockings. No sooner does the sun rise, than first a murmur, rapidly increasing to a roar, begins to whirl up from this place, compounded of poetical cries yelled with unpoetical voices, oaths, blasphemies, quarrellings, the shoutings of donkey-boys, the shriekings of camel-men, the vociferous exclamations of fifty Charons anxious for a fare. For

here is the ferry to Ghizeh, and dozens of boats are constantly crossing to and fro, laden with clover, lupins, corn, chopped straw, onions, women, men, asses, camels, horses, and soldiers, all heaped pell-mell. Every time one of these embarkations arrives, a storm of innocent ferocity bursts forth; a dozen boats have to be moved to enable it to reach the shore. Altogether the scene is highly picturesque, and amusing. When we were tired of it, we had but to turn northwards, where a long narrow branch of the river, like a canal, bordered with palaces and gardens, and reflecting trees and kiosques or the elegant forms of boats, stretches away between Rhoda and the mainland. Mysterious-looking little staircases, leading down to small landing-places, where boats might land a heroine of romance, or a lover packed in a basket like a huge salmon, occur at certain intervals; and set the mind a-thinking, especially by night, when the moon lights up this Venetian scene, and "tips with silver" trees, palaces, and khanjias, that lie, like huge birds, with folded wings, ready to fly away at the first signal. But the variety of the scene is not exhausted. The eye, glancing across a vast expanse of water, stretching from the steep-walled sides of Rhoda to the south,

takes in a landscape which may be somewhere surpassed, but which has no like; for there, sparkling on the horizon above many leagues of palm-groves, the sentinel Pyramids unroll their long procession—man-created mountains, along the sides of which summer-clouds stretch in thin white streaks, or storms break in the short winter season.

On the occasion of every visit I made to Cairo, I visited the Ghizeh pyramids at least once; and each time came back with increased wonder and admiration. But I shall not endeavour to reproduce my impressions; for if this be necessary, a host of others must have failed, and I should most probably fail also. Perhaps the effect produced is too great for description. There is but one circumstance to mar the pleasure of the trip. Travellers, undiscerning in their generosity as in their economy, have pampered the inhabitants of the village of settled Bedawins, who have appointed themselves, as guides into a set of as disagreeable ruffians as can be met with in a long voyage. It is impossible to be a moment alone or tranquil. A new-comer, especially, is surrounded at every step by truculent-looking rascals, who scream in his ears, and pester him in every describable way.

Neither presents, promises, nor threats, will avail as a protection; and I suspect that green visitors have been in the habit of allowing themselves to be bullied out of indefinite sums of money by these sleek cicerones. The vulgar tastes of ordinary tourists have suggested another species of annoyance. One man perpetually pursues you with a hammer and chisel, that you may comply with the odious practice of carving an obscure name on an immortal monument; and another offers for "two shilling" to clamber up the pyramid of Cephrenes in a given number of minutes. If you decline, these two individuals pursue you with fierce expostulations during the whole of your stay, and evidently regard themselves as defrauded of their due.

CHAPTER XVII.

Start for Upper Egypt — Massendi — Benisouef — General Aspect of the Country — Incidents of the Journey — Sheikhs' Tombs — Fellâhs singing at the Plough — Evening Halts — Arrival at Feshn — Scenery on the Banks — Visit the Town — Fellâhs returning from their Work — Country Salutations — Walks on Shore — Ruined Villages — Telegraphs — Mud Plain — The Place of the Ginn — Supernatural Inhabitants of the Country — Local Geniuses — Demonology — Curing the Possessed with Devils — Golosaneh — Begging Coptic Monks — Minieh — Egyptian Country-towns — Internal Commerce — Probity of Fellâhs — Rapid Progress — Manfaloot — Crocodiles of El-Akraat — Arrival at El-Hamra.

At length we were ready to start for the upper country; and the sails being spread, we went softly along a narrow branch shaded by the avenue of trees that leads to the Mosque of the Prophet's footstep. But after feeling our way for

a couple of hours in a perfect labyrinth of passes, we were obliged to return, and take the great stream. A good breeze springing up enabled us to regain the lost time, and reach Massendi sometime after nightfall. Those were interesting days to us, but will scarcely bear narration; and I will not reprint the journal of the little adventures, in which our boat was the principal character, and underwent divers tribulations from contrary winds, or over-strong winds, or light winds, or dead calms. We reached Benisouef on the fourth day, and, imitating the impatient traveller, were off again in an hour for Minieh.

Egypt, from Cairo upwards, exceptions duly excepted, is an immense winding valley bordered by walls of precipitous rocks, between which and the cultivated ground there is generally a slip of desert, sloping down like a glacis, or broken up by thirsty-looking watercourses. At almost regular intervals, the rocks, which sometimes merit the name of mountains, advance as it were in promontories towards the Nile, into which they here and there even thrust their feet. The river, very apt to make itself a new channel, to eat away or remove a field, rarely flows down the centre of the valley; but sometimes inclines to

one side, sometimes to the other, leaving for the most part the largest plains to the west. In no case, I believe, are the opposite chains out of sight of each other; nor are they commonly adorned with the blue tints of distance. Their harsh and naked forms, broken up often by gulleys and ravines, split and cleft by the sledge-hammer of time, dotted with the mouths of cavernous quarries or tombs, always glare hot and near upon the eye. The green groves, however, are never absent; and heavy harvests wave within sling-cast of eternal barrenness. It is easy to see that the surface of the river is higher than the land on the margin of the desert, and that in fact there is a regular slope downwards on either hand from the banks. The palm-groves are generally either close on the water's edge, or at the further limit of the plain. An intricate system of embankments, from ten to twenty feet high, connects one with another, as I have already said, the various villages,—rarely to be seen at a distance, for they are embowered in trees,—and the few large towns scattered at wide intervals in this interminable valley.

With the exception of a few pre-arranged halts, we were guided in our stoppages almost

entirely by the wind. Very frequently the mornings were calm, and a breeze blew for a few hours in the afternoon, dying away at sunset. If it continued beyond that time, it not uncommonly became a hurricane. We were amused all day, but few incidents occurred worth noticing. Derweesh would occasionally call out to a man on the bank, asking him whether such and such a tomb that gleamed amidst a few sycamores or mimosas belonged to a living or a dead Sheikh.. Sometimes an extraordinary yell attracted our attention, and we saw a half-naked fellâh following his plough, and supposing himself to be singing. All day long the sand-banks were covered with an immense variety of aquatic birds, from kingfishers to pelicans; and it was curious to see the latter huddling together in white legions on the approach of evening, in some sheltered creek for the night. We generally stopped near a village, but were often left by the breeze to moor against a lonely bank, on the edge of some vast plain of halfé, or under the lee of a jungly island.

I remember with pleasure the day we arrived at Feshn, which has nothing to attract the antiquary. As we approached, the Libyan range of hills receded almost out of sight from our

boat; whilst the precipices to the east gradually approached the river, until nothing remained between but a narrow slip of land, covered with halfé, a kind of coarse grass. Here and there, however, in a little corner, was a tiny hamlet, with a tiny grove and miniature fields. Towards the afternoon we came to a point where the rocks reached the river, and seemed quite precipitous, although along a small ledge that undulated on their face there was evidently a path; for several fellâhs were seen moving to and fro. On the opposite bank there was nothing to vary the scene but the usual trees, in uniform grouping.

When we reached the mooring-place of Feshn, we noticed that the rocks still come down nearly sheer into the river, though in some places a thread of soil has been left on a ledge, and produces herbs and bushes; whilst, at the bottom of a little gully, two tall palms bend fraternally one to the other. The rocks are not smooth and even, but look like the walls of a town battered for a breach, numerous huge blocks seeming ready to slide into the stream. The mooring-place was crowded with boats. Evening was drawing nigh when we landed. A man came to tell us that there was a wild boar in the dhourra; but we

saw neither tusk nor tail. On approaching the town along a winding-path, we found it to be prettily ushered in by groves of sycamores and various kinds of acacia trees, so that the poor dilapidated houses and tall balconied mosque just peeping over this mass of foliage, with the softening yellow sky of the horizon beyond, looked marvellously like a copper cut of Rembrandt drawn off on India paper. The air thrilled with the cooing of doves, which we had even now begun to despise and spare. Along every path that converged to the town, in bands, or one by one, the peasants were coming home from the fields, and saluted us cheerfully as they passed with "*Salamat ya khawagah*," "Salutation, O gentleman."

If you speak first, and use the Muslim form, "Peace be with you," the fellâh, in his politeness, will sometimes return it; but he looks puzzled, and rather displeased. In fact, this form is exclusively reserved for the interchange of civility between Muslim and Muslim; and to adopt it is almost to profess a community of religion. It is considered far more polite and conducive to the preservation of a good understanding for a Christian to use some other ex-

pression, and it would be a mistake to suppose that any inferiority is implied thereby. Except by some characters of natural insolence, we are admitted to be superior to Muslims in every respect but one; namely, that we have no hope of Paradise by means of the true faith. The fellâh, especially, according to his rude notions of the justice of God, thinks we are endowed with superior wisdom and wealth, and even virtue, in order to make up to us for the eternal damnation to which we are destined. If ever scepticism invade El-Islam, it will probably be introduced by meditation on so extraordinary a contradiction.

All this part of our journey was undiversified by any incidents. Several times a-day, when the wind dropped, we went ashore, now amidst groves, now in vast plains covered with tall grass. In many places we found that the sloping banks, just uncovered by the river, were already prepared for sowing, whilst the level grounds above seemed abandoned for mere grazing-ground. A vast portion of the country between Bénisouef and Minieh lies totally uncultivated,—in fallow for more blessed times,—and the population is scattered and miserable. Ruined villages occur here and here. A large one is to be seen from

the river amidst the rugged slopes of Ghebel Sheikh Embarak, which thrusts out its spurs and shattered fragments to the water's edge. A telegraph tower on the summit suggests the reflection that modern improvements do not necessarily imply any advance in real civilisation. Perhaps railways might become a fresh instrument of oppression, or a new cause of misery, in this country.

Opposite Sheikh Embarak, we stopped near the village of Malatieh, at that time surrounded by a wide expanse of mud, dotted with ponds here and there. This scene was in curious contrast with the ruggedness of the other side. The village itself seemed but a large heap of mud-clods; and as the sun went down the wind swept howling over the vast morass. We noticed a light in one of the houses—probably in a coffee-house—a rare circumstance in this part of Egypt, and suggesting comfortable ideas.

A little a-head is the village of Gindieh, explained—not very accurately, perhaps—to mean the place of the Ginn. Some tradition accounts for the name, but we could not work it out of an obtuse fellâh, who came down to sell eggs, and

answered all our leading questions by assuring us that his merchandise was good.

It is difficult for an European to imagine the space which the belief in supernatural agency occupies in the Oriental mind. Earth, air, and water in the East, are filled with spirits, evil or good, who constantly hold communication with mortals. The number of the evil ones, perhaps, predominates. Every day the fellâh is liable to come in contact with them. If he stumble over a clod, he must take care to invoke the name of God in a set form, otherwise he is safe to be possessed; and there is always a devil ready to leap down his throat in case he should happen to gape. He dare not, without first politely asking permission, either pour out water on the ground, or throw down any load, or sit upon the grass, or light a fire. Every place, every part of a house, is inhabited by its peculiar genius. The well is almost always haunted by a beautiful female spirit, who floats in the water, or hovers over its surface; and no bucket is ever let down without a previous "by your leave." Even the Mustra has uncouth, loathsome goblins, peculiar to itself; and on entering it is necessary

to say, "*Astabaka min el habs wa el habasi.*" In this invocation the name of God is left out; and for the same reason written paper is never trod upon, nor otherwise treated disrespectfully, because it either has the name of God written or printed upon it, or the letters which form that name. Most persons extend the same respect to white paper, simply because it has the power of receiving this sacred impression. To sit upon a book is considered the very height of impiety; and if it is done by accident, must be atoned for by an invocation specially adapted to the case.

Those who comply with the established custom are never molested. Only one instance is known of a devil entering in spite of the usual adjuration. The patient was wise enough to make such a horrible noise that the Prince of the Ginns appeared, and asked what was the matter. An explanation being given, he forthwith cut the offender into ten thousand pieces; since which salutary piece of severity all has gone well. Now and then, it is true, some unfortunate wight forgets to use the proper words, and is immediately possessed. A Hakim is then called in, who reads from a book, writes charms, pronounces incantations, and sometimes applies fire to the

mouth of the patient. At last the devil—often beaten in the person of the sufferer—gives in, and cries that he is ready to come forth by the eyes. "No," replies the Hakim, who considers this too respectable a place of exit. "By the nostrils?" "No." "By the mouth—the ears?" &c. At last, the humbled devil consents to come out from beneath the toe nails, or by some equally ignoble passage. The sister of our Reis was long afflicted in this way, until a celebrated Hakim cured her. She suffered chiefly twice a month, at the changes of the moon.

Golosaneh is a pretty village, picturesquely situated amidst palm-groves, opposite the island of Surarieh. We stopped there a short time, and then scudded away, with a fine stern breeze, for the Mountain of the Birds. Our rapid progress did not prevent two naked monks from swimming out and begging for their convent. It is said that Arab boatmen often ill-treat these poor devils. Our people made no show of doing so. On the contrary, they helped them to come on board, and gave them a garment to cover themselves whilst they advanced to the cabin. We soon left them plunging in the waves on their way back to shore; and gliding along past rocks,

groves, hamlets, and islands, arrived at length at Minieh.

The approach from the river to many Egyptian towns is exceedingly pretty. There is always a clump of sycamores or acacias; a tomb, with its white dome; a neat villa, surrounded by gardens of deep green; a mosque, with slender minarets; a coffee-house, with trellised arbour — some object, in fact, pleasing to the eye. All these elements unite to render Minieh attractive in a picturesque point of view. The interior of the town resembles that of most others. Long, dull, narrow, zig-zaggy streets, with gates here and there dividing the quarters; the names of streets and numbers of houses daubed on the walls in great flaring colours; now and then, a nice-looking house, with carved wooden balcony. A thin layer of dust seems, however, to have been sifted down upon all these cities of Upper Egypt, as if they had been threatened with the fate of Pompeii. All sharp angles are knocked or worn off, and the houses have the appearance of being about to settle down into mere heaps of rubbish. In the outskirts the process has really been gone through, and whole quarters are abandoned to the dogs, owls, and kites, that emulate by their

numbers the human inhabitants, both at Minieh and elsewhere. In every town, however, there is one bustling quarter — which it is agreed to call the bazar — where all business is carried on. Here small parcels of European or native manufactures, a common shawl or two, ready-made clothes, Bedawin blankets, &c., are ostentatiously displayed in the little stalls called shops, by solemn, self-satisfied, and respectable-looking people, who are styled merchants; also coarse tobacco and all the appurtenances of smoking, with the other articles of Egyptian trade, in very meagre quantities. The coffee-houses are sometimes neat; and I noticed that the seats in front of them were covered with the skins of wild animals, probably hyænas.

The import commerce of the upper country is carried on by a class of men who may be in some respects considered as privileged. They are often Turks, or connected in business with Franks and Levantines, and do not seem to complain much of interference. Each merchant, however, brings only a very small quantity at a time, as the means of communication are frequent on account of the immense number of boats that constantly pass to and fro to carry the bulky ar-

ticles of export, corn, cotton, &c. There is often a great deal of good faith observed in commercial dealings between Muslim and Muslim. A very creditable instance of honesty in the fellâhs was cited to us at Manfaloot — the more remarkable because the person who profited by it was a Jewish resident. He had bought a number of small crops standing, and paid in advance on written receipts. All these receipts were destroyed by fire, and yet the debt was in every instance acknowledged, and the produce delivered in due season.

We passed rapidly in our ascending voyage through numerous districts, that are interesting alike to the student of antiquity and to the observer of scenery and manners. From Minieh a delightfully steady breeze wafted us in one day by Metahara and Beni Hassan, by Rauda and Sheikh Abadeh, as far as Gerf-es-Sahan; and next morn we moored beneath the lofty bank of Manfaloot. The river has been ruthless in its destruction here; and has eaten away so industriously, that we saw what may be called a section of the town — half houses, streets cut short off, bazars docked of their best shops. The place is in a state of decline. No new quarters

seem to rise in compensation for those devoured by the river. The population retreats slowly and sullenly as the enemy advances, crowding closer and closer within the old limits, or emigrating, or otherwise disappearing. We did not stay long, but proceeded with a light wind to Beni Mahommed. The same kind of weather accompanied us the following day, through a succession of sunny reaches, to the little archipelago of El-Akraat, famous for crocodiles. We looked out for some of these loathsome monsters, but saw none. Subsequently we heard a curious incident of their manners. A certain Sheikh Sultan, in a garden near Siout, forbids them to pass in the usual way by that city; and will only allow them to do so floating on their backs. Having once descended, therefore, it is impossible for them to ascend; which accounts for their yearly increasing numbers at El-Akraat, in spite of the rifle of Ismain Pashat. Pocketing our disappointment, we proceeded until the minarets of Siout shot up behind a wood of massive green; but it was some time after sunset before we had crept round the great bend from Mankabat, by the groves and gardens of Waladieh, to the mooring-ground at El-Hamra.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Start from Siout—Character of the Father of Light—Out in the Fields—Pigeon-houses—Medicine-seekers—Copt Village fortified—Slow Progress—Little Dancing Savages—Arrival at Minshieh—Beautiful Twilight—"The Rice ate the Goose"—Boatman's Family—Port of Farshoot—Dooms—Brahminy Bulls—Calms—Birds of Egypt—Crocodiles—Pleasant Days—Aground—Keneh—A Village on the borders of the Desert—Polite Sheikh—Nadooras—Christian City of Negadeh—Catholic Convent—Interview with the Priests—Population of the City—Fresh Oppression of Christians—Gournou in sight—Vine-shaded Water-wheels—Christmas day at Thebes.

On starting from Siout we went, in half-a-day, to Gow-el-Gharbieh; and next day, sweeping along beneath the picturesque mountains of Sheikh Hereedi, reached the city of Ekhmim. But we were not permitted to continue this rapid progress. The following morning a light wind wafted us about a mile a-head, and then, dying away, left us to depend only upon the rope. On

such occasions we had opportunities of witnessing the willing energy of the crew.

One of our men, Abou Noor, the Father of Light—nicknamed by us Samson, on account of his giant proportions—was generally the leader; and, with the head of the rope passed round his massive chest, tugged away like two ordinary mortals. What a fine specimen of human nature was this! I should have a low opinion of any person who could know him and not admire and respect him. Setting aside his admirably proportioned frame, there was something in his countenance, better than handsome, that impressed one with a true idea of the simplicity and general excellence of his character. Unlike many boatmen who become favourites with travellers, he had nothing of the buffoon or parasite about him. I suspect, indeed, that he had a good share of hearty Muslim bigotry, and was not very anxious to earn the respect of us infidels, except as a vigorous tracker, a mighty rower, and an active climber. He said his prayers with obstinate regularity, and never sought to enter into conversation. His exuberant good-nature, however, rendered him willing to answer, and, above all, to oblige; and I have seen him hand a lady from

a boat with all the grace and gallantry of an accomplished gentleman. On one occasion a gun was lent him to join a party of naboot-men on the look-out for a sailor; he was as delighted as a child, but woefully annoyed when afterwards told, with unnecessary cruelty, that it would not go off. If he was a voracious eater, his puissant constitution probably required excessive nourishment: and we could not but regret the necessity to which his more abstemious comrades were driven, of declaring off from going shares with him in his meals. During the greater part of the voyage he ate alone, or with one or two messmates, who relished the cheese and onions which he found it necessary to add to his fare. He was, perhaps, the worst dressed of the crew; and was perpetually engaged during moments of leisure in cobbling the garments which his stupendous appetite did not allow him to replace.

When we were compelled to resort to tracking after leaving Ekhmim, we went ashore on the east bank, upon fields from which the harvest of dhourra had just been reaped. Numbers of men were at work preparing the ground for a new crop. Here and there rose a solitary sant, each peopled with a colony of doves, that kept up a

cooing conversation. Crossing the half-dry bed of a canal, we came to a village shaded by a small palm-grove, and adorned by a handsome Sheikh's tomb, painted with red flowers. The houses, like most of those in this part of the country, were but of one story; but on the roof of each rose a pigeon-house, equal in dimensions at bottom, but narrowing upwards, so that the village appeared like a cluster of towers. These pigeon-houses are composed of earthen pots embedded in clay, one for each pair. Overlooking the river, under a fine sycamore, was a coffee-shop, closed—perhaps for want of custom, perhaps only because its owner was abroad in the fields. Several fellâhs stopped us as we passed, to beg for medicine. One of them, I think, was afflicted with leprosy. These poor people generally ask for relief only from incurable diseases.

Beyond the village, on the margin of the desert, which here gradually approaches the river, was a Copt convent or village—a square building without windows in the exterior wall, and situated on a slight eminence. The fields it commanded, like a fortress, belonged to it. In Upper Egypt a very large proportion of the population are Christian, and live in these fortified retreats,

where pride, bigotry, fear and misery, have been their co-lodgers for twelve hundred years.

We still proceeded slowly. Sometimes the river near the banks was too shallow to allow our boat to pass, and we had to struggle upwards simply by the aid of poles. Mighty was the grunting as the crew, putting the *midris* to their shoulders, stamped along the gunwale at the rate of about a foot a minute. However, we at length reached a steep bank, and were about to send out a gang of trackers, when a favourable wind arose, but so slight that it only just enabled us to creep along. A crowd of children, boys and girls, naked as they were born, and, for the most part, the drollest caricatures imaginable, came to beg from the bank. They belonged to a village celebrated for its poverty—how poor must it be! The crew threw them a quantity of loaves of bread, but exacted in return the recognised payment of an indecent dance, which the poor wretches performed methodically.

A puff of wind filling our sails soon took us out of sight of these little savages, as well as of the Copt convent that had hovered long in view, and wafted us on to Minshieh on the western bank, where we moored as the sun went down.

The twilight was particularly beautiful. A red vapour overhung the western horizon—which was near and low, except where the village, rising on a hill, looked like a black fortress, towering above a dim plain of mud. The amphitheatre of hills that shut in a semi-circular plain to the east seemed dissolving into a purple haze. Richer and richer hues blushed over the whole prospect. The river shone like a plain of burnished steel; the heavens, of rosy-tinted blue, swarmed with stars, that beamed softly into birth; a few flakes of cloud hung above the coming moon, and receiving its herald rays, cast them down, as the hour advanced, into the dimming waters over the opal-coloured, almost transparent hills. Just as the vermilion streak in the west faded, and grey shadows came hurrying down upon the earth, the moon appeared, and dropped a lengthening column of silver into the river. The last twitter of the birds had long died away. All was hushed as the sleep of the just. If a sound had eddied to our ears it would have been the trickling of the dew. A slight mist had breathed upwards from the plain, looking like a fairy sea, above which, indistinct palm-trees nodded in their moonlight dreams. At some

short distance down the stream we saw a phantom-like sail, vainly spread to enable a boat to steer through the shallows to the mooring-ground. Instead of drawing near, it dropped gradually away, hovering still in view, however, and at length reflecting the ruddy flame of a fire kindled by the chilly crew. Our attention was suddenly diverted by a shouted song in another direction; presently a light came glancing round the point above us; the rapid treading of the oars mingled with the cheery voices of the boatmen; and then, the notes suddenly changing, the coming felucca darted in shore to the tune of "The Rice ate the Goose," specially reserved for such occasions, and was soon moored astern of our giant galley.

One of our men belonged to Minshieh, and had obtained permission to go on a-head by land from Ekhmim to visit his family. He joined us in the morning, surrounded by a crowd of affectionate relations. A part of his wages, procured in advance, was given to an old lady—I believe, his mother; probably for the joint expenses of herself and a young wife, who was also of the party, but not the most noisy or conspicuous.

A light wind, gradually strengthening, soon carried us on, first to Girgeh, where we stopped

only a short time, and then to what may be called the port of Farshoot, by the time that the doom palms were drooping along the shore in the moonlight. One of the numerous sugar-factories established by the members of the Pasha's family here rears its ungainly brick chimney. An immense number of Brahminy bulls, introduced, I believe, by the agricultural Ibrahim, came down to drink near our boat.

Calms frequently overtook us in this part of our voyage, and we spent a great deal of our time ashore, visiting the villages and wandering over the plains, and amidst the groves and fields. As usual, hawks and falcons, and kites and crows, were ever on the wing; and at intervals a melancholy scream aloft directed our attention to vast flights of wild geese, travelling in regular order through the skies. From patches of halfé grass, towards evening, numerous coveys of partridges rose as our feet rustled along. Doves every now and then floated from tree to tree; larks and sparrows whirled in giddy flight over the crops. Sicsacs clucked out their name on the margin of the river, or went hopping before us, calling as if they had some valuable secret to tell. Herons, at intervals, removed to the oppo-

site bank as we approached; cautious pelicans, and other aquatic birds, developed their long files along safe sand-islands. Cormorants, and divers and ducks, bobbed under the water now and then before we came within shot. Crocodiles basking in the sun began to be frequent; and we even saw one alive, made captive and muzzled by some fellâhs, who offered him for sale.

These were happy days—delightful strolls; and I regret that the insatiable craving after novelty occasionally interfered to mar them. The wind would not serve; and one morning we found ourselves aground amidst an archipelago of islands and sand-flats. Reaches, and creeks, and ponds expanded between the far-apart banks, that rose some twenty feet, and were loaded with tall crops of millet, plantations of the castor-oil plant, and groves of palms and the other customary trees. Not a village, not a house, was in sight; but when we landed and walked along the edge of the western bank, we heard men and women calling to each other in the fields, and revealing that the masters or the servants of all this exuberant agricultural wealth were nigh at hand. We learned, too, that when the harvest

was over the temple of Dendera would be unscreened; and this gave an interest to the scene it would not, perhaps, have otherwise possessed. At length we got on board, and reached Keneh in the afternoon.

But we merely paid a cursory visit to this city, and next day were once more toiling up against the current. Mighty slow progress we made. A long walk which I took to the borders of the desert on the east brought me to a little village, situated partly on the cultivated land, partly on the arid slope beyond. The people, men, women, and children, were getting in the dhourra, and singing as they worked. A respectable-looking personage — probably the Sheikh — sat smoking his pipe under a tree. He invited me to join him; but I could feel a northern breeze breathing up the valley, and saw the vast wings of our boat afar-off spreading to take advantage of it. We parted with mutual good wishes. I noticed that as the crops fell little turrets of mud, about six feet high, were left exposed. These are called nadooras, and serve as perches for the urchins who, armed with slings, pass the live-long day in driving off the robber birds. The cemetery

of this solitary village, with many white-washed grave-stones and one cupola, dotted the slope of the desert, which here swelled away in long stony waves.

The breeze that had warned me on board carried us to the Christian city of Negadeh, which shows a rather respectable front of lofty houses to the river. Here we visited the Catholic convent, were politely received by the priests, and treated with coffee in the vine-shaded arbour of their garden.

These worthy gentlemen — Italians — were mightily interested in European news, and we gave what we could. But in those distant parts there is a constant craving after wonders, and our matter-of-fact information was received with cool indifference. *They* had heard rumours, brought by Heaven knows what messenger, of mighty changes in the north, of the fall of monarchs, the convulsion of society, the tearing up of ancient land-marks—not the mere heavings of the past tempest, but a new and frightful hurricane of revolution. We reassured them as well as we could, and talked of the fate of Eastern Christendom. On this subject their information was more positive. They had heard

accurate details of the Aleppine massacre, although they commented too gloomily on its probable consequences. Of local matters they spoke with the contempt of familiarity. According to them, it is almost impossible to die at Negadeh, the climate is so healthy. One of the worthy fathers was a sportsman, and listened with a complacent smile and glistening eye whilst another enumerated some of his good shots. Altogether, these excellent gentlemen lead a pleasant life enough in their comfortable convent, with its walled garden and trellised walks; and if they exaggerate the import of the indistinct hum of distant civilisation, have as little to fear as to hope from impending changes. We refrained from asking information on religious affairs, and I do not know if the mission prospers. In its private capacity, perhaps it does. The tenacious spirit of accumulation, common to all religious bodies, has gradually surrounded the convent with a respectable estate, bought in small plots — this for fifty piastres, that for thirty. We resisted an invitation to supper, implied in the hint that the flesh-pots were smoking, and went on board well pleased with our little colloquy.

There are about three thousand Christians, Copts, in the city of Negadeh, and only five hundred Muslims. Formerly the population were very contented with their lot; because numbers gave them a position of superiority. By paying the gezyeh tax, in addition to the ferdeh, they were exempted, as Christian rayas are throughout the Ottoman Empire, from military service. Now, this impost is not removed, but they are taken by force as soldiers, nevertheless, and compelled to serve, dispersed through the ordinary regiments. It is becoming even the practice to seize them in lieu of the Muslims, in order to spare the latter. Their complaints will probably be long in reaching the Porte, the only source of redress.

The breeze still continuing, some active bargaining for the melayahs, or checked mantles for which Negadeh is famous, was interrupted, and we went on for several miles. Next day the mountains of Gournou were in sight; but we advanced slowly, walking some distance along the banks, where vine-shaded sakias (water-wheels) creaked as the blinded buffaloes went round. This method of raising water is far more common in the upper than the lower

country, where the shadoof, and even simpler machinery, is employed. The peasantry of the Saïd seem more prosperous, in general, than those north of Siout. At any rate, they are more independent, and have some marked peculiarities of condition as well as of character.

On either horizon peaked hills began now to appear; and, with emotions which I shall not record, we glided, bending under a sudden breeze, to our mooring-ground near the grove that conceals the temple of Gournou. A date must here find its place. It was Christmas-day; and with a party of friends whom we met, and who thenceforward kept us cheerful company, we ate our national dinner, and drank, as memory at once saddened and sweetened the bowl, to those we had left behind us.

CHAPTER XIX.

Monuments of the Thebaïd — Doubts on recent Discoveries — Grounds — Depredations of Dr. Lepsius — Forgery of Hieroglyphics — Necessity of copying Hieroglyphics — Cleopatra's Needle — Present State of the Thebans — Population — Fabrication of Antiquities — Villages — Settled Bedawins — Warlike Character of the People of the Saïd — Arms — Banditti of Middle Egypt.

DURING our two stays at Thebes we visited more than once every remarkable remnant of antiquity on both sides of the river; and instead of being disappointed, felt that the most elaborate descriptions hitherto published had scarcely prepared us for the immense variety of objects of curiosity in this district. But it does not enter into my plan to talk in detail of the fanes and palaces that rear their forests of columns, their mountainous walls and gateways, at various points of the plain; nor of the unnumbered tombs quarried out of

the rocks that overlook it. All these things, as their importance deserved, have been over and over again described; and if they are not familiar under their true forms to the imagination of the untravelled reader, it must be because words cannot convey an adequate idea of them.

A gentleman of our party had paid considerable attention to the subject of hieroglyphics; and, wonderful to say, had no particular theory of chronology in his head. It was his custom even to remark that the discoveries, or supposed discoveries of each day, often annulled those of the preceding one; and that as yet all was uncertainty, doubt, and confusion, in this difficult department of research. Such an admission, made with a frankness not common in a special student, encourages me to repeat that I have no confidence in any of the historical conquests alleged to have been recently made by means of the decipherment of hieroglyphical inscriptions. I am not prepared to debate the question, but trust that some one may have the courage to undertake its examination with the prospect of arriving at a negative conclusion. It may seem ungracious to suggest, it is true, that grave and learned men, patronised by governments and

applauded by the public, have been the victims or propagators of a delusion. But such I believe to be the case; and in my humble way, therefore, I say so, leaving others to confute, confirm, or disregard my opinion.

My doubts are in great measure based on the very tone of arrogant confidence in which, from time to time, discoveries are announced—a tone not adopted by genuine learned men in discussions of far more importance. It would seem that as materials become more obscure, more enigmatical, more susceptible of various interpretations, scholars think themselves bound to be more positive and dogmatical in their conclusions. Every gentleman who undertakes to read the sacred characters of ancient Egypt, evidently takes position at once, in his own opinion, as a kind of high-priest of archæology, entitled to speak oracularly to the uninitiated. Intense thought, working in a narrow and ungrateful field, is apt to breed egotism and over-much self-reliance. But, to the credit of this school be it spoken, they all agree in respectful adulation of each other; and though I have heard it suggested that this is in order to avoid controversies, which might lead to a public revelation of the small progress they

have really made, I think it more probable that each adept, like the members of a secret society, believes that his companion knows more than he, and endeavours to make up for his want of wisdom by looking wise and seeming to understand.

No doubt something has been done, some progress made; some letters have been proved, a few phrases have been translated: but no one pretends to know even the complete alphabet of the hieroglyphics, to say nothing of the vocabulary and structure of the Egyptian language. How, then, is it that I hear repeated, and see written, that the ancient Egyptian is nearly as accessible as any other Oriental tongue? How is it that the public seems to believe that the hieroglyphics are no longer a mystery, whilst every student knows that not a single Egyptologist—if that absurd word may be used—can, in the absence of the yet undiscovered key, give a complete translation of a single inscription of any length; can do more than guess, and infer, and suggest, or invent a meaning? Such being the case, a little more modesty might be advisable in the framers of systems, and trumpeters of marvellous chronological discoveries. One or two thousand years ought not to be added or taken away from

the history of an empire, without some very direct and positive evidence; and, above all, popular writers should refrain from presenting to the unlearned world the hypotheses of ingenious critics as established facts.

Being a sceptic to this extent, I venture to say so, although perhaps in my case, as in so many others, scepticism may arise from ignorance. I am more sure of my ground, when I protest against the conduct attributed to Dr. Lepsius in Egypt. I say attributed, because it is just possible that he may have been falsely accused, and that some other unknown Vandal may be the real culprit. Of course it is quite certain that, exaggerating a practice already followed in so many deplorable instances, he has removed tablets and inscriptions from Thebes and elsewhere, with circumstances of unscientific carelessness and disgraceful disrespect of monuments, over which he had no right, and which he had no commission to destroy. But is it really true, as I was assured at Thebes, that this gentleman actually forged a cartouche on the breast of a statue, in the front court of the great temple of Carnac? I am most anxious to learn the truth on this point, because, if such a practice be in-

dulged in by learned men, there is no knowing to what it may lead. If a single word be added in one place, a whole tablet may be introduced in another; and who can tell to what extremity the desire to support a system might lead an enthusiastic antiquary? A huge inscription by this same doctor defaces the entrance of the great pyramid of Ghizeh; and I am told that there is no danger of its being mistaken for a relic of antiquity. But more ingenious persons may succeed in deceiving the learned, and inextricable confusion may result.

Dr. Lepsius seems to have had a mania for writing hieroglyphics, and has introduced some choice ones (in which the group, conventionally translated, "barbarian king," is appropriately applied to his Prussian Majesty) upon the frontispiece of a book left at Gournou as a register for travellers. Most of our countrymen who have used it have taken care, with creditable good taste, to record their severe blame of the learned doctor's actions, especially of the smashing of whole inscriptions for the sake of carrying away some favourite bit. I trust that any of them who may have influence will exert themselves to put a stop entirely to this practice in all

its branches. Ancient monuments may be in danger of destruction in Egypt, but, when removed piece-meal, become mere useless old stones, or at least simple curiosities. I can understand the transference of works of art to European museums; they are of essential value, and furnish genius with materials and models. But inscriptions which cannot be taken away entire should be left to be enlightened by their context, every purpose of utility being served by faithful copies.

It is wonderful what a very small proportion of the writings on the temples and tombs of old Egypt has really been copied. Possibly the reason is, that, with the doubtful exception of the names of the kings, "Egyptologists," in spite of their affected confidence, really despair of ever being able to produce anything like correct interpretations. In the tombs of Beni Hassan, in those of Siout, and at Thebes and elsewhere, exist immense series of perpendicular lines, containing thousands of letters or symbols; but no one has attempted to copy them entire, though here and there certain little pieces, supposed to corroborate some favourite theory, have been picked out. As I have already mentioned, instances occur in

which learned Vandals, after reading, or pretending to read, a particular passage, have carefully effaced it!

Having touched on the removal of antiquities to European museums, I may here mention the subject of the Alexandrian obelisk, commonly called Cleopatra's Needle. It seems to have been determined to bring it home to England, at the expense of I know not how many thousands of pounds. I can hardly conceive a more ridiculous waste of the public money. The obelisk of Alexandria is, in the first place, far inferior in beauty to the obelisk of Luxor; and if we are bent on imitation, we should at least do something better than our neighbours. But, setting this point aside, of what purport or value will this huge block of stone be in England? We might as well bring home one of the columns of the temple of Carnac—nay, one of the Cataracts themselves. The obelisk of Alexandria, if raised erect and placed by the side of its sister obelisk, would be a great ornament to Alexandria, and prove an appropriate goal for the donkey-rides of griffins, anxious to get a tincture of antiquarian knowledge on their way out to India. If the Treasury have really money to spare for scientific objects, why

not do something for the recumbent statue at Mitraheny, likewise our property? why not raise it, and let us see its face for once? But perhaps I mistake—perhaps the Alexandrian Needle is not regarded as "an historical document," but simply as a trophy of military glory. It is rather late in the day to think of it in this light; and I trust that some of our economical members of parliament may interpose to prevent so useless an outlay.

But to retire within the circle I have marked out for myself. The contrast presented by the state of the present inhabitants of the plain of Thebes with that which the splendour of the remaining monuments of the ancient city suggests, is singular. But probably in old, as in modern times, the great bulk of the population were poor and miserable. From the little authentic information we possess, I should judge that the fellâhs of early times were, in general at least, as badly off as those of the present day; but there must have been a greater variety of classes, and far more persons possessed of a moderate degree of wealth. I have seen it stated that sumptuous tombs, of immense dimensions, were often occupied by one corpse, or at any

rate by one family; but in all those I have visited there were wells leading to catacombs capable of containing innumerable quantities of mummies. Possibly the clients and dependants of particular families were buried in these unadorned catacombs.

I believe that the various villages scattered throughout the Theban district contain some five or six thousand inhabitants. The condition and character of the people are, of course, much influenced by the neighbourhood of the antiquities, and by the constant influx of travellers. A great number of men and children gain their living by acting as guides and attendants, whilst others excavate for antiquities, and many manufacture them most ingeniously. A regular, but not too redundant supply, is kept up of golden signet-rings, curious coins, bronze images, leather boats, and other articles of ready sale. I should be sorry to spoil the market of these poor fellows, who have been driven to fabrication by observing that genuine, though somewhat dilapidated antiques, are no longer cared for; but it is right to mention this circumstance, lest one of these days the learned may add twenty or thirty centuries to chronology on the authority of a docu-

ment manufactured by some clever Chatterton of Gournou. This system of forgery once invented —and I am assured that it was first suggested by Europeans who should have known better—every document, of whatever character, removed from its proper place and taken out of Egypt, requires most unquestionable certificates of origin.

On the eastern bank there are two considerable villages, Luxor and Carnac; but on the west the population is more scattered. I strolled once to the north of the temple of Gournou, and found that the plain was covered with tombs, some of immense dimensions, but without ornament. Here and there were numerous hollows, in which a few huts were clustered, often at the mouths of catacombs. Goats, and poultry, and children, seemed to start up at every step under my feet. A scrambling village dots the declivities of the hill on the way to the Memnonium; and here, too, many of the houses are built at the entrances of the tombs, which serve as stores, stables, and often as refuges for the people. No doubt the neighbourhood of so many places of concealment assists in giving a certain character of independence to the modern Thebans.

Indeed it is to be observed, that throughout the whole of Upper Egypt the same causes produce the same effects in a greater or less degree.

Perhaps I have not sufficiently explained that throughout Egypt, especially to the south, there exist colonies of settled Bedawins, who preserve their old costume, and vary but little in manners and personal appearance from the genuine people of the desert. Indeed, they still belong to the tribes that wander over the neighbouring regions, and, in many cases, are ready at a moment's warning to resume their nomadic existence; whilst in others, by long habit, they have become irrevocably attached to the soil. It is not of these people that I now speak, but of the genuine Egyptian race, descended from the converted Copts, with an unimportant admixture of foreign blood. In the Saïd these people, fellâhs by birth and position, are distinguished from the serfs of the Delta, and other low provinces, by many peculiarities, some of which they possess in common with the Bedawins, whilst others are probably derived from very ancient times.

Among these peculiarities is one which, no doubt, depends principally on their distance

from the seat of government. This is their love of arms and their independent disposition. In spite of the attempt, made frequently, to disarm them, warlike weapons are constantly to be seen in their hands—spears, swords, and even guns. The swords which I have seen are not bent like the Turkish scimetar, but straight, with a crossed handle. Their spears are light, with a long, thin, triangular head, and might more properly be called javelins. Guns are rare, and powder and shot rarer still; but it is singular to notice the eagerness with which they accept the smallest present of ammunition. It ought to be mentioned, that there is no tendency among them to become banditti; whilst in Middle Egypt this tendency is strongly marked, and has required several very energetic demonstrations on the part of the Government. In the upper country, jereed-playing, copied or inherited from the Bedawins, is very common, and is practised with enthusiasm. The few formidable insurrections that have taken place among the Egyptian peasants have been above Siout.

I do not pretend, however, to have cast more than a cursory glance over the Saïd; and hold

it impossible properly to describe the manners of a country without making a protracted residence. I shall, therefore, be content, as I proceed, to record the few characteristic facts that came to my notice—subject to the correction of the more experienced.

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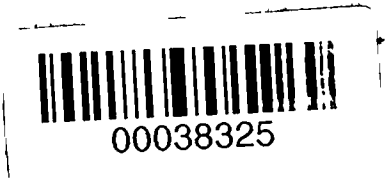
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